

THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY 2, 1871.

DENE HOLLOW.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER I.

SIR DENE.

A FAIR scene. None fairer throughout this, the fairest of all the Midland counties. Winter had turned. The blue of the sky was unbroken ; the sunshine shed down its bright and cheering warmth : it was the first day of real spring.

Standing on a somewhat elevated road, as compared with the ground in front, was a group of gentlemen, talking earnestly and noting critically the points of the landscape immediately around. They stood with their backs to the iron gates of the lodge ; gates that gave admittance to a winding avenue leading up to a fine old seat, Beechhurst Dene. Before them—the ground descending slightly, so that they looked down on it and saw all the panorama—were sunny plains and groves of towering trees, and sparkling rivulets ; a farm-house here and there imparting life to the picture. The little village of Hurst Leet (supposed to be a corruption of Hurst Hamlet) lay across, somewhat towards the right, as they gazed. Beyond it, at two or three miles' distance, was the city of Worcester, its cathedral very conspicuous on this clear day, as well as the tapering spire of St. Andrew. Amidst other features of the beautiful scenery, the eye, sweeping around the distant horizon on all sides, caught the long chain of the Malvern Hills, the white houses (very few in those days) nestling at their base like glittering sea shells amidst moss. The hills, rising up there, looked very close, not much further off than Worcester. They were more than double the distance—and in a totally opposite direction. Nothing is more deceiving than perspective.

A quick walker, taking the fields and the stiles ; that is, direct as the

crow flies ; might walk to the village of Hurst Leet in ten minutes from the lodge gates of Beechhurst Dene. But if he went by the road—as he must do if he had either horse or vehicle—it would take him very considerably longer, for it was a round-about way, part of it very hilly. He would have to turn to his left (almost as though he were going from the village instead of to it) and sweep round quite three parts of a circle : in short make very much like what Tony Lumpkin calls a circumbendibus. The question, occupying these gentlemen, was, whether a straighter and nearer road should not be cut, chiefly for the accommodation of the family residing at Beechhurst Dene.

The chief of the group, and most conspicuous of it, was Beechhurst Dene's owner—Sir Dene Clanwaring. By the Clanwaring family—and consequently by others—it was invariably pronounced Clannering : indeed some of the branches had long spelt it so. Sir Dene was a tall, fine man of fifty years ; his features were noble and commanding, his complexion was fresh and healthy. He was of fairly good family, but nothing *very* great or grand, and had won his baronetcy for himself after making his fortune in India. Fortunes were made in those by-gone days, when the East India Company was flourishing, quicker than they are in these. It was nothing for the soldier, resident there for long years, to unite with his duties the civilian's pursuits, so far as money-making went ; and Dene Clanwaring had been one who did this. He was a brave man, had won fame as well as money, and at a comparatively early age he returned home for good, with a large fortune and a baronetcy. People told fabulous tales of his wealth—as is sure to be the case—augmenting it to a few millions. He himself could have testified that it was about six thousand pounds a year, all told.

Looking out, on his return from India, for some desirable place to settle down in for life, chance directed Sir Dene Clanwaring to Beechhurst Dene. Whether it was the estate itself that attracted him, or whether it was the accidental fact that it bore his own name, Dene, certain it was that Sir Dene searched no farther. He purchased it at once, entailing it on his eldest son, John Ingram Clanwaring, and his heirs for ever.

Shortly after entering into possession of it, his wife, Lady Clanwaring, died. Sir Dene—standing there in the road before us to-day—is, as may be seen, in deep mourning. It is worn for her. He was very fond of her and the loss was keenly felt. Close by his side, is his second son, Geoffry ; a tall, fair, golden-haired, pleasant-looking young fellow, who is in black also. Near to them, bends an old and curious-looking little man, very thin and undersized ; his hard features are pinched, his few gray hairs scanty. It is Squire Arde of the Hall. He wears a suit of pepper-and-salt ; breeches, waistcoat, gaiters, and coat ; with silver knee and shoe-buckles, and a white beaver hat. Over his clothes, is a drab great coat of some fluffy material, but the Squire has

thrown it quite back, and it seems to lodge on the tips of his narrow shoulders. The only other individual, completing the party, is Jonathan Drew, Sir Dene's bailiff; a hard man also, but a faithful, trustworthy servant. Sir Dene took him over from the previous owner, Mr. Honeythorn, and had already found his value. Drew managed the land and the tenants well; though complaints were murmured of his severity. He was turned sixty; a lean maypole of a man, in a long fustian coat and high-crowned brown hat, looking altogether not unlike a scarecrow in a corn-field. The bailiff was uncommonly ugly; and appeared at the present moment more so than usual, from an access of ill-temper: which is plainly perceptible, as he addresses his master.

"'Make my duty to Sir Dene, Mr. Drew, please, and tell him that I can't be turned out of my house nohow; I've got the paper,' says she to me. 'Then why don't you perduce the paper, Mrs. Barber?' says I, bantering at her. 'Cause I can't find it, sir; I've mislaid it,' goes on she. 'Mislaid what you've never had,' says I, as I flung away from her. And she never did have it, Sir Dene," wound up Drew; "don't you believe it, sir. Obstinate old granny!"

"When she sees that there are other cottages to be had; when she knows that it will be to the advantage of all her neighbours, I must say that I think it is unreasonable of her to refuse to go out," remarked Sir Dene, his brow contracted his face severe just then. Accustomed all his life to command, he brooked not opposition to his will.

"Onreasonable, Sir Dene!" echoed Drew. "It's a sight worse nor onreasonable: it's vicious."

The new road, that Sir Dene purposed making to the village, had been the subject of much planning and consideration between himself and his agent, Drew. One or two sites had been thought of; but the best attainable—there could be no doubt of it—the most convenient and the shortest, was one that would open nearly immediately opposite his own gates. The line that would have to be cut through was his own property, every field of it, every hedge: and a foot-pathway, for a part of the road, seemed to point out its desirability. If they cut in this line, it would be at quite a third less cost, both as to money and trouble, than any other. Naturally Sir Dene wished it to be fixed upon; and Drew, who was red-hot on the new scheme, knowing it must improve the property, would not tolerate any complaints against it.

But there was an obstacle. About a hundred yards down the path just mentioned, stood a cottage of the better class: a dwelling of five rooms, with masses of yellow jessamine climbing up its outer walls. It had once belonged to a small farmer-proprietor of the name of Barber. He had died in early life (a great many years ago now), leaving a widow and two daughters. His affairs were found to be in disorder—that is, he had died in hopeless debt. The widow and daughters took immediate steps to extricate themselves and uphold their late father's integrity.

The cottage with the bit of land attaching it was sold to Mr. Honeythorn, then the owner of Beechhurst Dene, who had been long wishing to possess it. Widow Barber remained in the occupancy of the dwelling and one field as tenant, paying an easy yearly rent : and she said that Mr. Honeythorn had given her a paper, or covenant, promising that she should not be turned out while she lived.

To make the road in the track contemplated by Sir Dene, this cottage would have to come down, for the line ran right through it. Drew, acting for Sir Dene, served Mrs. Barber with a formal notice to quit. Mrs. Barber met it by a verbal refusal (civilly and tearfully delivered) to go out ; and an assertion to the above effect : namely, that she held the granted right to stay in the cottage for the term of her natural life, and that she possessed a paper in Mr. Honeythorn's own writing to confirm this right. In fact, this paper alone constituted her right : for nothing in relation to it had been found amidst Mr. Honeythorn's effects, though his executors had searched minutely. Jonathan Drew told Mrs. Barber to her face that there had never been any such paper, save in her imagination : Mrs. Barber had retaliated, not only that there was such a paper, but that Drew knew of it as well as she did ; and that he had known of it at the time it was given. However, Mrs. Barber, search as she would, could not find this paper : she had either lost or mislaid it ; or else had never possessed it. Matters therefore stood at this point : and Mrs. Barber retained the notice to quit at Lady-Day—which was fast approaching.

The affair had vexed Sir Dene ; it was at length beginning to enrage him. Fully persuaded—partly by Drew, partly by the fact of absolute non-evidence—that no such right had ever been conceded to the widow Barber, he could not see why the old woman's obstinacy should be let stand in the way of his plans. One dwelling-house was surely as good for her as another ! But he had not quite fully decided on this thing : he was standing out there now, talking it over with his son and Drew, with a view to arrive at some decision. Squire Arde had come up accidentally.

"It would be but the work of a month or two," cried Sir Dene in his enthusiasm, standing with his arms on the fence, and looking across to the village. "See, Mr. Arde, it seems but a stone's throw."

"And nothing in the way of it but that dratted cottage !" put in Jonathan Drew.

Geoffrey Clanwaring was sending his good-natured blue eyes roving here and there in the landscape, apparently in thought. Presently he addressed his father.

"Would it not be possible, sir, to carry the cutting a few yards on this side, (moving his right hand), and so leave the cottage standing ?"

"No," replied Sir Dene. "The road shall be cut straight ; or not at all."

"If you was to make a in-and-out road, like a dog's leg, as good stick to the old un, Mr. Geoffry," spoke up Drew. "Besides, there'd be the stream in the way lower down. No: there ain't no line but this—and Sir Dene 'll hardly let a pig-headed old widow stand in the light of it."

"There's the smoke a sprouting out of her chimney," struck in Squire Arde—who in familiar life was not very particular in his mode of speech, after the fashion of many country gentlemen of the period.

"A biling of her pot for dinner!" cried Drew. "Miserable old-cat!"

"I mind me that something was said about that paper at the time," resumed the Squire.

"What paper?" asked Sir Dene, sharply.

"The one given her by Honeythorn."

Sir Dene drew a long breath. He would never have committed an injustice in the teeth of facts.

"Was such a paper given to her?"

"I don't know myself," replied Squire Arde, gazing out at the smoke with his watery eyes. "Some talk on't was abroad. 'Twas said Tom Barber's widow had got such a paper—had got it out of Honeythorn. On t'other hand, it might ha' been all lies. Drew, here, ought to know which way 'twas."

"I've told Sir Dene which way 'twas—that there warn't none," spoke Drew, tilting his hat up on his bald head. "Mr. Honeythorn did nothing o' that kind without me—not likely to. And if he had—put it that way: ought it to be binding on Sir Dene? Why in course not. Old Granny Barber's one o' them cantankerous idiots that thinks nobody's turn is to be served but their own."

"Well, I must be going—or I shall not get there and home again by two o'clock, and that's my dinner hour," observed the Squire, pulling his white coat forward over his contracted chest. "I've got a goose to pluck with Black, up at the Trailing Indian. He was seen in my woods a night or two ago: and he'll have to tell me the reason why."

Drew threw back his long neck in a kind of mockery. "If you can keep Randy Black out o' your woods, Squire, you'll be cleverer nor other people."

"Well, I'm going up to him to have a try at it," was the old man's answer. "Good day to ye, Sir Dene."

"A moment yet, Squire Arde," said the baronet, detaining him. "Tell me truly what your opinion on this subject is. Should I turn the old woman out, or not?"

But the curious little man seemed to shrink into himself at the question; to become smaller than ever, if that were possible: as he avoided Sir Dene with a shake of the head.

"No, no, Sir Dene Clanwaring—no good to ask *me*. I've lived long enough to know that to thrust one's finger into one's neighbour's

pie brings often nothing but heartburning in the long run. If I said to you 'turn her out,' and you came to repent of it later, why you'd lay the blame on me. 'Arde advised me' you'd be muttering to yourself night and morning, and give me anything but a blessing. Take t'other view. If I said to you '*Don't* turn her out; make the road elsewhere,' and you took the advice, you'd be ever hankering after this track that you'd missed. The cottage would become an eyesore: you'd call yourself a fool, and a double fool, to have been guided by old Arde. No, no. You must act upon your own judgment, Sir Dene; not mine. It's nothing to me. The old roads have done for me my time, and they'll do to the end. Good day."

He moved away with brisk steps towards the left, stooping forward, as was his wont. Another minute, and there met him three individuals: a gentleman and two young ladies. At least, if not a gentleman, at the first sight he looked like one. It was Robert Owen; a farmer who had but recently come to live in the neighbourhood, renting a farm of Sir Dene's. He was of notable appearance. Sir Dene was a handsome man, but not so handsome as Robert Owen. He would have been of distinguished presence amidst kings. Of noble height, slender and upright, his face, with its clearly-cut features of the highest type, its pure complexion bright even yet as a woman's, and its very dark blue eyes, presented a picture beautiful to look upon. But what caused him to be more remarkable than aught else, was the fact that he had a soft, silvery white beard, falling over his white top coat: and in those days beards were very uncommon. In years he might have numbered about as many as Sir Dene. His two daughters had inherited his beauty—but not his height. Lovely girls they were, with dimpled, blushing cheeks, and of modest, simple, retiring manners, generally called, both in this neighbourhood and the one they had left, "the pretty Miss Owens." Mary, the elder of them, had been a wife for some months now: George Arde, a relative of the Squire's, had married her. Maria, the younger, was Miss Owen still.

"How do ye do, Owen?" cried the Squire, carelessly.

Robert Owen touched his hat as he answered that he was well—and "hoped the Squire was." None could be more sensible than he of the social distance that lay between him and Squire Arde: he was but a humble, working farmer. The young ladies stood blushing; Mary not venturing to speak, unless the Squire should first notice her. They wore hooded scarlet cloaks, the fashion in those days, and white straw gipsy hats, their beautiful brown hair falling in curls underneath.

"It's you, is it!" cried he, nodding to Mary. "How's George?"

"He is quite well, thank you, sir," she replied, with a slight curtsy.

"Over here?"

"No, sir. He is at home. My father came into Worcester yester-

day and brought me back : my mother's not well. George is coming over for me to-morrow."

With a slight general nod from the Squire, to which the young ladies curtsied and the farmer again touched his hat, they pursued their respective ways. The footsteps caused Sir Dene and his party to turn their heads, which were still bent over the fence. Jonathan Drew vouchsafed an ungracious nod to the farmer ; Sir Dene a more pleasant one ; but Geoffry Clanwaring went up, spoke cordially to the farmer in his free, good-natured way, and shook hands with Mrs. Arde and Maria Owen.

It was but a slight episode. They went on, and Mr. Clanwaring returned to the fence again.

But Sir Dene had become tired of standing still ; perhaps a little tired of his indecision. Saying something about business at Hurst Leet, he suddenly turned alone down the narrow path before-mentioned—which would take him straight by the cottage in dispute.

Perhaps few cottages could boast less of a look-out. This had none. The door nearly abutted on the path : certainly there was not more than a yard and a half of ground between : but that little space was redolent of sweet-scented gillyflowers—as they are called in Worcester-shire. On the other side the path, the bank rose as perpendicularly as though it had been a cutting ; a high bank, whose elm trees, towering above it, threw the shadow of their branches over the cottage-roof. This fine grove of trees—which began at the top of the path, opposite Sir Dene's gates—was the pride of Sir Dene's heart. He'd not have had any one of the trees cut down for the world. The cottage—as Sir Dene walked—lay on his right hand, the bank and trees on his left. The door was standing open as he passed, and he caught a vision of a plump old woman inside it in grey stockings, who was stooping to skim a pan of cream in the passage.

"Old mother Barber," said Sir Dene to himself.

"Old mother Barber," hearing the footsteps, looked up. When she saw whose they were, a tremor, as if an ice-shaft darted through her heart, took her, and she ran into her kitchen like a frightened hare. She wore a short black gown of rough flannel cloth, its sleeves cut off at the elbow ; a cotton print handkerchief crossed upon her shoulders, the ends, back and front, confined under her check apron, and a mob-cap tied round with black ribbon, the bow in front. What little hair could be seen, was grey. A cleanly-looking, but timorous old woman, five or six years past seventy. To be turned out of the cottage, in which she had been born, and had lived all her life, seemed to her the very worst evil that could by possibility fall on her in this world. The old cling to their resting places ; and it is in the nature of age to exaggerate evils.

The kitchen window looked out upon a fair scene : it was just as pleasant as the front was dull : sunny plains near, Worcester in

the distance. Morning after morning, as that old woman awoke, her eyes had fallen on the familiar Malvern hills (for she could catch a glimpse of them slantwise from her front chamber), on the white dots of houses underneath them, glistening in the early sun, and on the sloping vale of wood and dale descending in one great expanse.

"Lord be good to me!" she murmured, her hands crossed upon her bosom, that was beating so fast underneath the cotton handkerchief. "Let not my poor homestead be 'reft from me while I live!"

Her glance fell on her cherished out-door belongings: on the one pig in the sty; on the cow in the meadow, by whose produce, the milk, she was helped to live; on the patch of cabbage and potato ground. The brook, winding along nearly close to her back door (and which brook perhaps caused Sir Dene's difficulty in regard to taking the road a few yards further off, as his son had suggested, for the water, widening into a stream lower down to feed the mill, might not be interfered with) was dancing in the sun, its gentle murmurings falling lightly on the ear. Time had been when that murmuring soothed her to peace: latterly, since this horrible fear had oppressed her, it seemed to suggest nothing but woe. Suddenly, another sound drowned it—a sharp knock as with a stick at the front door. Looking out of her kitchen, she saw Sir Dene.

And whether she stood on her head or her heels, the poor woman could not have told had she lived to be a hundred. The sight scared her senses away. At the most favourable of times, and when she was a younger woman, she would have been struck into incapability at the presence of a great man like Sir Dene Clanwaring: regarding him now as a powerful enemy, it increased the feeling ten-fold. Saying he had stepped back to speak to her, he walked, of his own accord, into the open small front room, or parlour; which had a sanded floor, and a bright-painted tea-tray lodged against the side wall for ornament. She followed him in, curtsying and shaking visibly. Without any circumlocution, Sir Dene enquired whether she was in possession of the paper that she professed to be.

What with the abrupt question and its nature, what with her own startled fears, and her innate timidity, Mrs. Barber behaved like a lunatic. She could get out no answer at all. When it did come, it was strangely hesitating, and given in a whisper.

She "believed" she had got such a paper somewhere—and she hoped "his honour" would not be hard upon her.

Sir Dene Clanwaring curled his lip. An honourable man himself, he regarded deception as the worst fault on earth. This old woman before him was shaking from head to foot; her speech and manner were alike uncertain, and he believed she was telling him a falsehood. From that moment, he regarded the plea, she had put forth, not as a mistake on her part, but a pure invention.

"Look here, Mrs. Barber," he said sternly. "The road I purpose making will be of great benefit to myself and the public : it ought not to be stopped by any private interests. If you have the paper you speak of, bring it to me, and I will consider it—though I do not promise, and do not at present intend, mind, to be swayed by it. This is Tuesday : if, on Friday, I have not the paper before me, I shall give orders for the work to go on. Lady-Day will fall about a week afterwards : and I must request that you will be out of this on or before that day shall come. Good morning, ma'am."

She closed the door after him with trembling hands, when he had got to a proper distance. And then she sat down on the nearest seat—which happened to be a milk-pail turned bottom upwards—and wiped her face with her apron.

Sir Dene went on down the path. In a short while it widened considerably and branched off into the open fields. Had the cottage stood as low down as this, there would have been no absolute necessity to raze it. But—it stood where it did stand : nothing more could be made of it than that. Bearing to the right, and passing his bailiff's house, which was nearly hidden amidst some trees, Sir Dene crossed a stile at the end of the field, and the village was before him, the church lying rather far beyond it. As he was passing the village stocks (used often then), the village doctor, James Priar—a little man in spectacles, who looked ten years older than his real age, which was but thirty—crossed his path.

"Have you decided about the new road, Sir Dene?" he asked, when they had talked for a minute or two.

"Yes ; in a week's time from this you will see it begun," was the baronet's firm answer, as he pursued his way.

Just a minute we must take to follow Drew, before closing the chapter. Not for any particular purpose as regards *him*, but to afford the reader a little more insight into the locality.

Mr. Jonathan then, when his master quitted him, and Geoffry Clanwaring had disappeared within his father's gates, betook himself about his business. He pursued the road to the right—in the opposite direction to that taken by Squire Arde. About here it was solitary enough—but he soon came to some farm-houses and cottages. Some half-mile, or more, from the gates of Beechhurst Dene, there stood back on the left a substantial stone house ; with good gardens and farm-buildings around it. This was Arde Hall. The road here was open, and the village underneath (underneath, so to say, for the ground still sloped a little) could be more plainly seen. Here would have been the best spot to make the new road—if one must have been made at all : but Squire Arde, to whom the ground belonged, would as soon have thought of making a bull-run. Jonathan Drew came to a standstill, as if tracing it out—for the road was what his thoughts were running upon.

"Ay, this 'ud ha' been the right track to hollow it through," ran his reflections. "Catch old Arde at it! When Sir Dene does it, though, Arde won't be back'ard to reap the benefit. A down-right good move, it'll be for Sir Dene's property. My old bones 'll be spared a bit, too, when I can ride straight up, 'stead o' going round or trapesing it afoot. The Squire gets more niggardly as he gets older. Wonder who'll come in for his savings—and his estate? Shouldn't wonder but he'll leave all to a mad-house! As to that cross-grained Granny Barber, who's she, that she should put in her spoke again the public good? One place is just as good as another, for the short time she'll want a place at all. One foot must be in the grave now, and t'other hardly out on't."

With this, Mr. Drew brought his comments to a conclusion. There was a pathway down to the village from hence, just as there was nearer Beechhurst Dene; and he appeared undecided whether or not to take it. But finally he continued his way on the road. We need not follow him: the highway took a sudden turn just above here, and branched off, between rich pasture lands, and homesteads large and small, far away from Hurst Leet.

CHAPTER II.

HAREBELL FARM.

IN turning to the left, on emerging from the gates of Beechhurst Dene, the road continued to run in a tolerably straight line, for about the third of a mile. It then branched off, almost at right angles, in two directions: that to the right being the continuance of the road; that to the left soon becoming nothing but a solitary lane. We may have occasion to follow the road later, so just now we will take the lane.

As dismal and shadowy a place at night, this Harebell Lane, as you would care to enter. On the right, lying back, stood a very moderate-sized dwelling, with its fold-yard, ricks, and barns. This was Harebell Farm; in the occupancy of Robert Owen. Not far on, on the left, were two wooden gates side by side; one for carts, one for people on foot—they were the back entrance to Beechhurst Dene. The lane wound on, getting narrower and darker. Its banks were tolerably high; its over-hanging trees shut out the daylight. But soon it widened considerably: in one part forming on the right-hand a capacious curve, in which lay a rather deep pool, green with slime within and rushes without; and known as "Harebell Pond." A plantation of firs was fenced in on the bank rising immediately above it. Altogether, in spite of its space, this was the most dreary part of the lane. A few yards onwards, the lane, narrowing again, took a sharp turn to the right, and led direct

to an inn of not too good reputation, called "The Trailing Indian." The man keeping this inn was named Randolph Black. His brother, Moses Black, had died about a twelvemonth ago at Harebell Farm. They had come strangers to the place some years back, evidently monied men : at any rate, flush of ready money ; and became tenants of Mr. Honeythorn. Moses took Harebell Farm ; Randolph the solitary public house known then as "The Plough" ; but which he re-named "The Trailing Indian." After a few years, Moses Black died. Randolph immediately applied to Sir Dene Clanwaring (who had just become his landlord through the purchase of Beechhurst Dene) to be allowed to take the farm as well as the inn ; evincing unmistakable eagerness that it should be so. His character, however, had developed itself by that time ; and Sir Dene, instructed on the point, refused. Robert Owen then presented himself as a tenant for the farm ; and to him it was let. A little beyond the Trailing Indian, Harebell Lane was crossed by a high road ; in fact, was terminated by it : and it was to the chance of the travellers on this high way turning aside to the inn that the Trailing Indian trusted—or assumed to trust—for its support.

But we must go back to Harebell Farm. Entering at the small wooden gate (that, and the large one by its side, looked like twin brothers of those of Beechhurst Dene on the other side the lane) and passing round by the barns, the ricks, and the fold-yard, we come to the front ; for the dwelling faced the opposite way. The house was full of angles ; the red-brick of which it was built had become dark and dingy with age. A square patch of lawn and flower garden was before the door ; beyond it stretched out the expanse of meadow and corn-fields ; with the tips of the Malvern hills bounding the horizon in the distance.

It was a day or two after the one mentioned in the last chapter ; and the sky was as blue as then, and the sunshine as bright. In a homely room, partaking somewhat of the kitchen as well as of the parlour, save that cooking was not done in it, sat Mrs. Owen after dinner ; a delicate-looking woman of low voice and gentle manners. She had on a warm gown of purple stuff, a large collar of muslin-work—the mode then—and white lace cap. Her feet rested on a footstool ; her thin hands were busy with a heap of stockings, sorting those that wanted darning from those that did not. At the window, preparing to embroider a strip of fine cambric that was to form a portion of an infant's cap, sat Maria Owen—prettier without her bonnet even than with it. She wore a dress of light, checked green silk, its sleeves finished with a ruffle and a fall of lace just below the elbow. Her hair fell in glossy curls, her fresh, bright, dimpled face was something good to look upon. The floor was of red brick—squares—but a carpet covered it to the edge of the chairs : the furniture, plain, old, but of substantial mahogany, was polished to brightness. This was the parlour in ordinary use ; there was a handsomer one, called the best parlour, for high-days and

holidays. The terms dining-room and drawing-room were too grand for a farm-house in those unpretentious days.

Maria looked up to speak : some eagerness on her beautiful face.

"Mamma, how long do you think I shall be, working this cap?"

"That depends, my dear, upon the time you are able to give to it," was Mrs. Owen's answer. "You cannot neglect your necessary home occupations for fancy-work."

"Oh I know that. I won't neglect anything. I should like to get it done in two months."

"You have chosen so very intricate a pattern, Maria."

"But it will be all the more beautiful. I should not like Polly to be buying a best cap. Rather than that, I would tell her I am working this one : though I want it to be a surprise. I think you can give me some old lace for it, mamma."

"I shall see, when the cap's finished—whether it is worth it."

Standing by the fire, having come in during this soliloquy, was a rather tall and somewhat hard-featured woman, with a strange look of perplexity on her sensible face. She wore the costume of the day, a print gown straight down to the ankles, white stockings, and tied shoes. This was Mary Barber : the faithful upper servant of the house—indeed there was but one maid kept besides—but regarded more as a friend than a servant. Her features were well-formed ; her hair, worn in small curls on either side her face, beneath the cap-border, was of a bright-brown yet. What Mary Barber's age was, could not be guessed from her appearance. At thirty years of age she had looked middle-aged ; she looked it still ; she would probably look it for thirty years to come. Perhaps she was now not much turned forty. Her mother was the old woman you saw skimming the milk.

"Have you done that bit of ironing, Mary?" asked Mrs. Owen.

"No, missis."

A shade of surprise passed over Mrs. Owen's features. But she said nothing.

"I can't settle to anything, missis ; and that's the plain truth," burst forth the woman, flinging up her hands. "It is a cruel, wicked thing, that my poor old mother should come to this when she's close upon her grave."

"It is very grievous to be turned out of one's home," remarked Mrs. Owen, a sad, far-off look in her lifted eyes.

"It's worse to have her word disputed : at least *I* think it so. Jonathan Drew told me to my face last night, missis, that mother must be in her dotage, to fancy she had ever had the paper."

"But you told me Mr. Drew knew of her having the paper."

"Mother says he knew of it ; she has always said he did. I wish Sir Dene Clanwaring had stayed where he was, afore he'd ever come here to trouble us."

"When once your mother's out—if she has to go out—I daresay she won't mind it, Mary Barber," observed the young lady. "One home is as good as another."

"Much you know about it, Miss Maria! If you had to be turned out of yours, you'd tell a different tale."

"Why I have been turned out of it. We all have. That is, my father chose to leave. I can tell you, Mary Barber, I was sad enough at the time; but I like this one best now."

Mary Barber gave a rather significant sniff, as if she thought there might be some special cause for the young lady's liking the new one best.

"You don't understand it, Miss Maria. The young can't be expected to know how old people become attached to their homes, so that they seem like just a part of themselves and that it gets as hard to part with 'em as it is to part with a limb. I am sure of this," concluded Mary Barber emphatically—"that if mother is drove out, she'll go straight to the grave-yard."

Maria dropped her cambric in consternation. "Do you mean that it would—kill her?" she asked in a low tone.

"Just as certainly, Miss Maria, as that the Lord's looking down upon us to note the injustice. And He *will* note it—if it's done."

"Hush, Mary," interposed her mistress. "Let us hope for the best. She may be let stay in it yet."

"Well, I'll hope it, missis, as long as I can: and I'll do my best to further it. But it won't be none the nearer coming to pass, for all that: I've not had these bad dreams lately for nothing. And poor mother, always in distress, is first and foremost in every one of 'em."

There was a short silence: the cookoo clock against the wall ticking out lazily the minutes of the afternoon. Mary Barber resumed.

"If it warn't for that bit of ironing, missis—and I know it ought to be done when to-morrow's Friday and cleaning-day—I'd ask you to spare me."

"What for?" questioned Mrs. Owen.

"To go to Sir Dene Clanwaring," said the woman in a decisive tone, and both her auditors looked up in amazement. "When I was at mother's last night I told her to have one good last hunt for the paper, and to send it me this morning if she could find it. It hasn't come; which is a pretty safe sign that it's not found. But perhaps if we both go together to Sir Dene, she and me, and I speak up quietly for her to him—for she'd never have the courage to speak for herself—he may listen to us, and let her stay. The ironing——"

"I'll do the ironing for you, Mary," cried Miss Owen, starting up with sweet good nature. "I'll go and set about it now."

Mary Barber made ready for her errand; and came down stairs dressed in her best, surprising her mistress. A cinnamon-brown gown of soft cashmere, and grey twilled-silk shawl with its handsome

border of bright colours. She had had the shawl for half her life, and it looked as good as new now. The straw bonnet, of the "cottage" shape, had gray ribbons on it.

"You have dressed yourself up, Mary!"

"Yes, missis. If I had gone in my rags, Sir Dene mightn't have looked twice at me. Dress goes down with all the world. You'll wish me luck, ma'am."

And as Mary Barber turned out at the back door, a folded handkerchief and her large cotton umbrella in her hand—an invariable appendage when she had on her best things, no matter how fine the weather—an old slipper and a joyous laugh came after her from Miss Maria.

She went along at a brisk pace, drawing on her gloves. In the fold-yard she met the farmer. He regarded the dressed-up apparition with intense astonishment.

"Why where are you off to, Mary, woman?"

She told him where. Mr. Owen shook his head a little, as if he had not much faith in the result of the expedition.

"You can try of course, Mary Barber. But great men, like Sir Dene, don't choose to be dictated to, or thwarted in any scheme they set their minds on."

"Sir Dene went as far as to say to mother that he'd deliberate upon it if the paper could be found, master," she observed, noting the signs.

"But the paper's not found. My opinion is, it would have been better never to have said anything about the paper, as it's not forthcoming."

"Why!—surely, master, you are not supposing that there never was any such paper?" she exclaimed.

"I feel as sure as you do that the paper was given," he answered.

"I heard speak of it at the time. But Sir Dene is a stranger among us; and, to assert such a thing to him, and in the same breath to plead inability to produce the paper, gives a bad impression, you see."

Mr. Owen was in his usual working attire—for he took a very active part amidst his men: drab breeches and gaiters, and a drab coat. In his younger days, Robert Owen was fond of pleasure; had been what would now be called fast, seduced to it perhaps by his remarkable beauty. He would neglect his business to follow the hounds, to take a morning's shooting, to kill time and spend money in many other ways. Debts had accumulated, and he had been ever since a crippled man in means. Instead of remaining a gentleman-farmer, he had been obliged to degenerate into a working one, always pulled back by want of capital. None could regret that early improvidence more than he: but unfortunately regrets don't undo these things. He had taken this new farm, hoping to do better at it than he had at the old one, the

lease of which was out. Mrs. Owen had been quite willing to leave the old home. They had lost their younger son in it, a very promising youth, under distressing circumstances; and while she stayed in it she could not forget her sorrow.

"Mary Barber will not succeed," was Mr. Owen's mental thought, as he stroked his fine white beard in abstraction, and his eyes followed her through the gate to the lane. "The old woman has no doubt inadvertently destroyed that paper: and, without it, she has no legal case."

"Well, mother, is it found?" began Mary Barber, entering her mother's home and kitchen without ceremony.

Mrs. Barber was bending over the fire, on which stood a large saucepan full of potato peelings that she was boiling for her fowls. She turned her head.

"Lawk a day!" was her exclamation, as the vision of her smart daughter burst on her astonished view. "Whatever be you decked out for, like that, Mary? 'T aint the wake."

"No; but missis has gave me holiday," replied Mary, sitting down on the wooden chair, which she dusted first with a cloth. "Have you found the paper, mother?"

Poor Mrs. Barber shook her head. "I've looked for it till I can look no longer; above stairs and below. I looked till I went to bed, Mary; where I got no sleep all night; and at daylight I was up, looking again. It'll wear me out, child; it'll wear me out."

Lifting the saucepan on the hob, lest its contents should burn while she ceased stirring, she dropped on a low wooden stool, and hid her face in her hands. Mary Barber was looking more cross than compassionate.

"To leave the place where I've lived all my life! To see my bits o' furniture turned out, sold perhaps—for where am I to put 'em?—these very pots and pans, even" (ranging her eyes on the hanging tins) "that I've kept as bright as silver! My poor cow; my fowls; the pig in its sty—Mary, I'd rather the gentlefolks would kill me outright."

"Now look here, mother," said Mary—who never wasted the slightest time or sympathy upon sentiment. "That paper is in the house, or ought to be: and if it is, it must be found. First of all—where did you put it?"

"Where did I put it?" repeated Mrs. Barber, rather listlessly, for just at the moment her thoughts were running on abstract matters. "When I was looking in the press this morning—and *that*'ll have to go along o' the other things, Mary! Oh, woe's me!"

"Just carry your mind back, mother"—with a slight stamp of the umbrella—"to that back time when it was given you. Who brought it here?"

"Who brought it here?—why, Squire Honeythorn himself. He came in and sat down in this kitchen in that very chair of your poor father's. I remember being vexed because I'd not got on my best black with the crape bottom to it; a bombazine it was, three shillings a yard. Miss Reynolds made it, the grand dressmaker at Worcester, and——"

"About Squire Honeythorn, mother," interrupted Mary Barber, bringing her up.

"Well, he came in—I can see his pigtail now, hanging over the back o' the chair. The money for the house and land was paid over to Lawyer Haynes, he said, and he had brought to me himself the promise in his own hand that I should not be turned from the place while I lived. A great rogue, that Haynes was! He buttered his own pocket smartly while he settled with the creditors."

"Mother, there's the afternoon slipping on. Where did you put the paper then?"

"In my best tea-caddy," said the old woman promptly. "All my papers of consequence be kept in there; and nobody has never had the key of it but me. That same day, after I'd locked it up, young Jonathan Drew looked in to say the money was paid—not knowing his master had been here before him. I told him of the promise I had got: and he said it was no news to him. Squire Honeythorn had told him he should give it."

"Have you seen the paper since then?"

"Yes, many a time. I've looked at it when I've unlocked the caddy for other papers."

"Will you let *me* look, mother? May-be, it's there still."

Mrs. Barber was a little offended at this, asking her daughter if she thought she had no eyesight; but finally consented. The tea-caddy, a japanned one, had stood on the parlour mantel-piece, its middle ornament, as long as Mary could remember. Mary's keen grey eyes searched every paper—chiefly consisting of the half-yearly receipts for her rent—but the missing paper was not there.

"You must have put it somewhere else yourself, mother."

"I suppose I must. There was a great talk one winter of the highwaymen being about, and I know I got in a worrit over my caddy o' papers, and hid 'em away in places. But I always thought I'd put 'em all back again later."

"Well, there seems nothing for it but to beg grace of Sir Dene Clanwaring, as we've got no proof to show of any right. And that's where I am going, mother, and what I've made myself smart for. You must come with me."

But the astounding proposition put Mrs. Barber into a tremor—go to Sir Dene Clanwaring!—and Mary found it was of no use urging it. So she departed alone. In the narrow pathway, almost close to the cottage, stood Jonathan Drew and a couple of men; the latter with a

measuring chain in their hands. Mrs. Barber saw them from her door, and turned as white as death.

"What be you a doing?" demanded Mary Barber, as she was passing them.

"Only a measuring out o' the ground, a bit," said Jonathan Drew.

"For the new hollow they talk of?"

"There's not nothing else we should be a measuring of it for," was his retort. And Mary Barber walked on.

Crossing the high road, she entered the gates, and proceeded up the avenue between the fine old trees. Beechhurst Dene was an ancient red-brick mansion, roomy, old-fashioned, comfortable, and withal handsome both outside and in. It stood in the midst of its park, ornamental gardens immediately around it. Mary Barber had been there more than once in Mr. Honeythorn's time, and knew it well. Avoiding the grand front entrance, she bore round to her right, to the familiar one used by the servants, tenants, and in fact often by the family themselves. Just on this side, the look-out of the house seemed confined, so many trees and shrubs were crowded about. A pathway led direct to the gate in Harebell Lane: and Mary Barber would have made that her way of entrance at first, but for having to go to her mother's. The French windows of a parlour opened this way, and Mary saw Sir Dene sitting in it. Knocking at the open side door with her umbrella, she asked a footman if she could be allowed to see his master. The servant did not happen to know her. He told Sir Dene a lady was asking to see him: "leastways a respectable-looking woman, that might be a farmer's wife."

Sir Dene admitted her. But when she introduced herself as Mary Barber, and he found she was the widow Barber's daughter, come to bother him about the new cutting, he felt anything but pleased. Something had occurred that afternoon to vex Sir Dene: it had nothing to do with the matter in question; but it served to put him out of temper. However, he was civil enough to ask her to sit down, and did not refuse to hear her. It was a small room with a bay-window; the floor covered with matting; Sir Dene chiefly received his tenants here, and other business people.

Mary Barber sat bolt upright on the extreme edge of the chair; her folded handkerchief and umbrella in her hand, her back to the window. Sir Dene was on the other side the table, near the fire, his open desk before him. He listened to what she had to say, without once interrupting her.

"Do you think this paper, that you talk of, ever had any existence?" he asked then—and his tone bore a kind of suppressed scorn, which caused Mary Barber's hard cheeks to flush.

"I am sure it had, sir."

"Did you ever see it, Mrs. Barber?"

"No, sir; never," was the straightforward answer. "My mother did not show it to me. And I never heard that my sister saw it, either," she added, in her honesty. "Father's affairs took a good while to arrange after his death; and before they were settled, my sister Hester and I had gone out to relieve mother of our keep, and make our own way in the world. I went to service; Hester married."

"Does she—your sister—profess to remember anything of this promise?"

"She has been dead some years, sir."

"Don't you think it a strange thing that your mother should not have kept more carefully a paper of the importance she appears to attach to this?"

"My opinion is, sir, she has kept it too carefully, and put it into some out-of-the-way place for safety, that she can't now remember," was Mary Barber's independent answer. "There's no doubt she was scared with fear of the highwaymen: and the best of us are liable to forgetfulness, especially when we grow old."

"I cannot say more than I have done," cried Sir Dene, impatiently. "Produce the paper, and its merits shall be examined. I am in ignorance as to what weight it carried, or was intended to carry. Of course, if it conferred the right *legally* that you seem to fancy—which I think almost an impossibility—we must submit it to a lawyer, and take his opinion: but I strongly suspect it was not legally worth the paper it was written upon."

"Mr. Honeythorn would not trifle with my mother, sir."

"As to Mr. Honeythorn, I don't doubt that his bare word, passed, would have been good for him to act upon to the end of his life, without need of document to confirm it. But, what bound him, could never be meant to bind me. No, ma'am, nor be expected to, in any sort of reason."

The manners in those past days were far more courtly than they are now. Sir Dene Clanwaring thought nothing of addressing Mary Barber as "ma'am," and did not do it ironically.

"I'm afraid you'll go on with this dreadful thing, sir," she said, her grey eyes fixed upon him.

"Dreadful thing! It will be a very good thing."

"Not for my mother. She has been a good woman, sir; her cup of sorrow brim-full."

"I should say she must be an obstinate one, Mrs. Barber. She would be as well in another cottage as this—and there are plenty to be had for the seeking."

"She cannot live long, sir," pleaded Mary Barber. "She——"

"As to that, she may live as long as I," was the interruption. "She is a tough, healthy, hearty woman, and may last for ten or fifteen, ay, for twenty years to come."

"She is in her seventy-sixth year, Sir Dene. Oh, sir, spare her. Don't turn her out to die. I'd make bold to ask, sir, how you would like to be turned out of a home where you'd lived all your days, when you shall be as old as she is. She was born in it; it was her father's before her; and she brought up her children in it, Hester and me. Sir, I know you are one of the high gentlefolks of the land, and it's not becoming of me to dare to speak to you in this free way. Heaven knows, I'd only do it for poor mother's sake."

"I thought the property belonged to your father," observed Sir Dene, on whom the pleading cry appeared to make no impression.

"No, sir; to my mother: she was Hester Drew. When she married Thomas Barber, he went home to her house—which was reversing the order of things in ordinary. Father had nothing of his own: and he was somehow a bad manager: not fortunate. When he died, and it was found affairs were bad, there seemed nothing for it but selling the property, so that folks should be paid—and my sister and I turned out at once. Squire Honeythorn was sorry for mother, and he gave her the promise we tell of."

"Is your mother any relation to Drew, my bailiff?" asked Sir Dene, noting the coincidence of the name.

"His father and mother's father were second or third cousins, sir—nothing to speak of."

"Has your mother any income of her own?"

"Not a penny, sir. She sacrificed all she had to pay father's debts. The sale of her milk and poultry meets her rent, perhaps a bit over; and she has 'tatoes and other garden stuff; and her pig—which makes bacon to last her the year. And for the rest, I help her to a bit o' tea and that, and Hester's family to other trifles. We shall never let her starve, sir, whatever betides."

"At her age she ought to be glad at the prospect of being relieved from the care of a cow and pig," remarked Sir Dene.

"It is her great pleasure to be active, sir: the back is generally fitted to the burden. Mother is hale and hearty yet."

"She is," pointedly acquiesced Sir Dene. "I have just said so, Mrs. Barber."

He looked at his watch. Mary Barber took the hint, and rose. Sir Dene politely opened the door for her.

She stood still, and curtsied to him. And then—as she was actually passing out—turned round, and clasped her gloved hands in a beseeching attitude, holding the great umbrella by one little finger.

"Oh, sir, I hope you'll please to think kindly of it! I could hardly pray harder to God—as He hears and knows—than I'm praying for this boon to you. She has no one living to take her part but me, or to speak a word for her. Be merciful to her, sir, in this her old age, and let her be! She may not stand in your way long. God will be sure to reward

you for it, Sir Dene ! and she will pray for blessings on you every night and morning of the few poor years of her remaining life."

Hard, matter-of-fact Mary Barber had never spoken such words in her days ; never perhaps been so near to be moved by emotion. After they came forth she stood a moment looking at him, expecting perhaps some hopeful answer. But none came. Sir Dene Clanwaring steeled alike his ear and his heart.

"I am sorry this should have occurred, Mrs. Barber. In entering upon a fresh estate, one has to look I suppose for disputes and vexations. If I gave in to this one, others would no doubt arise : therefore, I must make a stand in my own defence. Good afternoon, ma'am."

Mary Barber, feeling that she had bitterly failed, went straight back to her mother's cottage. There, her bonnet and shawl taken off, her gown-skirt and sleeves turned up, and the biggest apron tied round her that the place afforded, she instituted a thorough search for the missing paper. And found it not.

But Sir Dene Clanwaring, even while he gave her the last decisive answer, said to himself in his heart of hearts that he would sleep upon it. As he did.

And a very heavy sleep it was. For he dropped off the instant he got into bed, and was woke up in the morning by his hot water. During the process of shaving, he decided that Mrs. Barber, née Drew, was what his bailiff, her distant relative, had called her—an obstinate, cantankerous, troublesome old woman, who must not be allowed to stand in the light of himself and her neighbours.

And that the road should be made.

CHAPTER III.

MARIA OWEN.

IT was a wild night. Clouds chased each other across the sky, darkening the face of the moon ; the wind dashed along in fitful gusts with a rush and a whirl, dying away in wailing moans.

Stealing up Harebell Lane with steps that seemed to fear their own echo, went two men, carrying between them a bulky parcel, to all appearance remarkably heavy for its size. They had smock frocks thrown over their ordinary attire, and hats slouched low on their faces. A casual passer-by would have taken them for labourers, tramping home with tired feet after a day's ploughing : a keener observer, if accustomed to live amidst rustics, might have seen how uneasily those smock frocks sat, and divined by instinct that they were assumed for a purpose.

"Bear your own weight of the load, Geach, and be hanged to ye," growled one, who was short and compact, to his taller companion.

"And don't I bear it?—You be shot !" carelessly retorted the other.

The parcel was more like a bundle, its outside covering of dirty canvas, and might have been supposed to contain garments, rather untidily rolled up together: In the stout cord by which it was confined were left two loops at either end, by which the men carried it.

"Change hands."

They had gone a few paces further when Geach said this, and were close to the gates leading into Beechhurst Dene. Voices and steps, as if advancing from the Dene, at this moment became audible; and the men, who were in the act of changing hands, started. A moment's pause, to listen: when Geach pushed his comrade into the ditch under the hedge, without the smallest compunction, and the bundle upon him.

"Keep dark, for your life, Robson!" he breathed. "Hide it, man; hide it. Hang that moon!"

The offending moon, left bright by a departing cloud, was not apostrophised by any so innocent a word as "hang:" but the language really used by these men could not be allowed to appear in polite literature. Possibly believing he was too tall for any hedge or ditch to conceal him, Geach noiselessly leaped to the other side of the lane, and then went on with a bent, sauntering gait, whistling a rustic song, as two people emerged from the grounds of Beechhurst Dene.

"Good night t'ye, masters," he said, in the Worcestershire tone.

"Good night, my man," heartily responded Geoffry Clanwaring, who made one; the other being Simmons, his father's young gamekeeper. And they passed down the lane out of sight.

With some grumbling and grunting, the man called Robson got out of the ditch: which, fortunately for him, was tolerably dry. Taking the parcel between them as before, they stole on, Robson growling still.

"Tell ye what it is, Geach," he muttered. "This here lane ain't the place it used to be. What with these here new folks at the Dene and their crowd o' servants, and that dratted farmer in Mosy Black's farm, I'll be smothered if I call it safe."

"Where's the danger?" airily responded Geach.

"The danger! Take to-night. If them two had pounced upon us afore we'd time to get it away, they might ha' turned curious eyes on it. One was Sir Dene's son; t'other was the keeper. I knowed 'em by their voices."

"Well? They'd have seen a bundle of—anything—done up with apparent looseness, and two poor tired labourers tramping home to their night's rest. What o' that? Before there can be any danger, there must be suspicion, Robson: and I'll take my oath there's none o' that abroad yet. You were always a croaker."

"I don't care; I'm right," grumbled Robson. "The way here is not the lone way it was; and danger may come."

"Better hold your tongue just now. There may be ears behind that hedge of Owen's."

It was good advice, and they went on in silence. By the pond, Geach again demanded to change hands. He was a very tall, upright, and apparently strong young man; yet his arms seemed to get tired quickly. Robson remarked upon it.

"I had a bad fall a week ago, and my bones haven't done aching yet," explained Geach in a whisper.

What with the natural gloominess of the lane, and the densely black cloud covering the moon, it had been for some minutes safely dark. There occurred a sudden change to light as they were changing hands: the moon shone out in all her best brightness, causing the open part where they now stood to be almost as light as day. Robson, his mind not altogether at ease and his eyes roving everywhere, suddenly saw some object leaning over the fence above the pond. Was it a man? Starting back a step involuntarily, he hissed forth a low signal of caution. Geach was always prepared. He pushed the bundle entirely into the arms of his companion—who slightly staggered under the unexpected weight—and began whistling again, as they walked on like two unconcerned rustics.

Yes, it was a man. And one they recognised. There shone the seal-skin cap, tipped with white fur, and the whiter beard of Robert Owen. He was evidently looking at them; watching them openly. They would have gone on, pretending not to see him, but that a rather sharp cough took Mr. Owen at the same moment: and they could not assume not to hear. Geach stopped his whistling, and turned to speak.

"If ye please, master, can ye tell us whether we be in the right road for Bransford?"

"For Bransford? Why that's a long way off," returned Mr. Owen. "You'll have to wind about a bit, my men, and do some cross-country before you get to Bransford. Where d'ye come from?"

"Worcester last."

"Worcester! Then why did you not take the Bransford road direct—if it's Bransford you want?"

"Missed our way. Thank ye, master."

Resuming his whistling, and giving a pull to his hat by way of salutation, Geach walked on. Robson had not stopped.

Mr. Owen stretched himself over the fence to look after them, until they were hidden by the winding of the lane. Geach knew, almost by intuition, that they were being watched. A very emphatic curse broke from his lips.

"What did I tell ye?" whispered Robson. "The Trailing Indian's not as safe as it was. It may have to shift its quarters."

"Shift its quarters be stifled!" retorted Geach. "Black can take care of himself: and of you too."

"Well, it's a new thing to be watched like this in Harebell Lane. I don't stomach it, Geach; I can tell ye that."

A short while, and they arrived at that solitary hostelry : a low, two storied old house with gables, and a dangling sign-board. The turnpike road, that ran crossways and terminated the lane, was within view. It has already been said that the Trailing Indian professed to derive its support from chance travellers passing up and down it.

Save for one candle, put to stand in a casement window, the inn presented a dark appearance—which for an inn looked most inhospitable. Letting the parcel fall gently on the ground, Geach gave three distinct knocks on the door, and then tapped at the window. The candle was removed from the casement, and a man's head came out.

"Who's that, knocking at my window?"

"Me and Robson. Open the door, Randy."

Mr. Black hastened to do so. Amidst his friends—and foes too—his Christian name was familiarly converted into Randy: it came easier to the lips than "Randolf." He was a tall, swarthy man of five or six and thirty, with a sinister look in his dark face. Catching up the bundle in his arms, he led the way through passages to a remote room, closed in with shutters: not the room of general entertainment, one entirely private to himself. The men took off their smock frocks, and the landlord called about him. A little woman, very pretty once, but pale, sad-eyed, and struck into meekness by terror long ago, came forward in answer to his call. It was Mrs. Black.

"Get supper at once—pork chops and mashed potatoes; and put a good log on the parlour fire," said Black imperiously. "Don't be a month over it, now: and come and knock at the door when supper's ready."

Save for an ostler, who slept over the stables, and was on very close terms with his master, no servant was kept. The ostler would give help at odd jobs sometimes, otherwise Mrs. Black had to do all the domestic work. It was not over-burthening in a general way; *bonâ fide* travellers at the inn were few and far between. For all the profit they brought, its master might have starved.

The inn had a bad reputation, though the suspicions cast on it were but of a vague nature. Stout sailors and boatmen occasionally made their way to it from barges coming up the Severn, striking across the country from the river by night; and it was thought their inflated appearance told of concealed brandy-skins and tobacco. Smuggling was largely pursued in those days, and brought back its profits. It is possible that Mr. Black dealt in other things: that his house had some safe hiding-places in it, where booty, the proceeds of robberies in town and country, might be stowed away in safety until the hue-and-cry after it was over. These men, at any rate, sitting round the table to-night, were neither sailors nor boatmen. A tale was current in the neighbourhood that a traveller had disappeared at this inn in a very mysterious manner. It was a pedlar, tramping the country with rather

valuable wares. That he had called in at the Trailing Indian for refreshment one summer evening, there was no doubt, intending afterwards to proceed on his way to Worcester by moonlight. The landlord, and the ostler, and Mrs. Black, all declared that he had so proceeded: and there was no proof at all that he had not. How ever it may have been, the pedlar had not turned up at Worcester; he had never been seen or heard of since.

There was only one candle on the table; and, that, of tallow; but the articles Mr. Black was feasting his eyes upon, shone as brightly as though they had been illuminated by lime-light. Massive articles of solid silver, were they; some few of gold: no wonder, packed compactly, that the two porters had found them somewhat heavy. Geach was a fair, nice-looking young man, his features small, all but the nose; that was high, shapely, and prominent. He was born to fill a better station, but evil courses had brought him down in the world. Robson had a close and contracted expression of countenance. They were telling of the encounter with farmer Owen.

"It won't *do*, you know, Black, to be watched by him," cried Robson savagely. "If he is to pass his nights haunting the lane, the sooner the Trailing Indian knows it, the better."

"I wish Sir Dene Clanwaring had been sunk, before he refused to lease me the farm in Mosy's place!" exclaimed Black. "He is going to cut a hollow somewhere now, to bring up waggons and carts quicker from Hurst Leet—smother him! As if we wanted more ways up here!"

"That's not much, Randy—a cutting. Owen *is*."

"Owen had better keep himself and his eyes for his own affairs; he may find himself in the wrong box if he attempts to look after mine," was Mr. Randy's comment. "The outcry's pretty hot, I hear, at Worcester."

Geach laughed. "Nothing less than a gang from London, they say."

"I can't think how he could have been standing," resumed Robson presently, returning to the subject of farmer Owen—for the encounter seemed to have made a most unpleasant impression on him. "The fence is right against the trees."

"No it's not," said Black; "there's a strip o' pathway. And my brother, Mosy, was fool enough to make it, as a short cut to the two-acre meadow. Owen has got some sheep there; and now that the lambing season's on, he or the shepherd is everlastingly out with 'em at night. One or t'other on 'em's sure to be out."

"But why need he halt in the pathway and push his ugly beard over the fence to watch the lane?" contended Robson. "What's it for, Randy?"

"How the devil should I know?" retorted Randy. "Here; lend a hand, you two."

The articles had been placed in a box. Black then opened a closet in the room, which had apparently no other egress, pushed up one of

its panels, and got through the aperture, Robson and the box disappearing after him. As soon as they were back again, and the closet door and panel made fast, Mrs. Black knocked to say supper was waiting in the parlour. And the three went out to it.

We must return to Geoffry Clanwaring. Passing down the lane with his game-keeper, seeing nothing and suspecting nothing of the man hidden in the ditch, he had reached the end of the lane, when two people were observed approaching; one of whom was laughing gaily. A silvery, sweet laugh; that a little stirred the pulses of Mr. Geoffry. It was Maria Owen. She had been spending the afternoon at Hurst Leet, and was returning attended by the house servant—a stout red-cheeked and red-armed damsel, named Joan. Maria wore her gipsy cloak, its hood of scarlet drawn round her face and her pretty curls.

Geoffry Clanwaring turned back with Miss Owen; the keeper pursued his way onwards, straight down the road. Arrived at Mr. Owen's gate, they stood to talk, and Joan went in.

"Mamma was to have gone with me, but she did not feel well enough this afternoon; so they sent Joan to bring me home," explained Maria, chattering and blushing, and her heart beating wildly for love of the handsome young man before her. He could see the rosy dimples in the moonlight, he could see the sweet eyes, cast down beneath the gaze of his. Every fibre within him thrilled in answer, for she was more to him than—ay, almost than heaven.

Love is no respecter of persons; the fitness of things never enters into the god's calculations. Between Geoffry Thomas Clanwaring, the baronet's son, and Maria Owen, the obscure farmer's daughter, there lay miles of that exacting gulf, called social position: nevertheless, they had contrived to lapse into a passion for each other, than which nothing could be more pure and ardent. Part them, and the whole world would be to each as a blank wilderness.

Sir Dene had three sons. The heir was entirely a fine gentleman, living chiefly in London, amidst his clubs and his gaieties and his friends in high life. The youngest was a soldier, already married, and serving in India. Geoffry, the second, remained at home, looking after things on the estate, making himself quite as useful as Drew the bailiff did. Geoffry might generally be seen in velvet shooting-coat and leather or beaver leggings, tramping about on foot, or riding on horseback, always however busy. It was whispered by Gander, a servant who had lived with them for years, that Sir Dene liked him the best of all his sons. The heir was cold and haughty; the soldier improvident and cross-tempered; Geoffry alone had never given anything but duty and affection to his father. Out and about the land daily, it was thus he had formed the acquaintance of Robert Owen, and thence of Owen's family. It had become quite an ordinary matter now for Geoffry Clanwaring to run in and out of Harebell farm at will.

"What were you laughing at, Maria?" he asked, as they stood there at the gate. "You and Joan?"

"I was laughing at Joan. She had been telling me a tale of a sweetheart she had in her last place. It was the carter. He gave her up because she threw a can of buttermilk over him in a passion. Joap says he was only angry because he happened to have on a clean smock frock; had it been a dirty one, he'd not have minded."

Geoffry laughed.

"Mr. Clanwaring, I must go in. Mamma will be sending after me."

"I saw George Arde to-day," he resumed, paying no attention to the hint—except that he held her hand a little tighter—for it lay in his.

"Oh did you? Where?"

"At Worcester. I went in about the sale of some barley, and met him in High Street."

"Did he say anything about Mary?"

"No. Except that she was very delicate just now."

"Polly is always delicate."

"When are you going over there next, Maria?"

"I don't know," she replied in a low, half-conscious tone. For the truth was, that whenever she did go to Worcester, Mr. Geoffry invariably contrived to be there on the self-same day.

Thus they lingered, talking of one thing and another, oblivious of the lapse of time, and Maria continuing to run the risk of being sent for. No one came, however: for the best of all possible reasons—that it was not known she was there. Mrs. Owen and Mary Barber were at work together in the parlour, and Joan did not disturb them to tell of her entrance. The girl, experienced in the matter of sweethearts herself, knew what was what. But the time was really getting on.

"There has been an audacious robbery of gold and silver plate at one of the silversmiths," observed Geoffry, suddenly thinking of it. "Worcester was up in arms: the Bow Street runners are down."

"What a pity!" she cried. "I hope the thieves won't come near us. Indeed, Mr. Clanwaring, I must go in doors."

Placing her hand within his arm, he walked with her up the path and round to the front, slowly enough. At the garden gate between the tall holly hedge they halted again. There was not the slightest necessity for this: it was not the way indoors; took them in short a few steps out of it. Perhaps the truth was, that one was just as ready to make an excuse for lingering as the other. The garden shone out fitfully in the night, now bright, now dark: just now it was very dark, for the moon again lay under a large black cloud. Not five minutes since, another large black one had but cleared away.

Very dark. It might have been for that reason that Geoffry Clanwaring, leaning forward on the gate, threw his protecting arm round Maria, and drew her close to him.

"I *must* go in," she whispered.

For answer, he turned up the sweet face, so lovely in its frilled scarlet hood, and took a kiss from the cherry lips. A kiss; and then another.

"Oh Mr. Clanwaring!"

"Now you shall go in, my darling—as it *must* be."

The moon came out of her canopy bright as gold, flooding the garden and trees and house with her light. There ensued another minute of lingering. It was broken in upon by Mr. Owen himself. He saw his daughter run in; he saw Geoffry standing there: and he seized on the opportunity to say what it had been in his mind to say for some few days past. Namely: that, though his house was pleased and proud to receive the visits of its landlord's son, there must be no approach to intimacy with Maria.

"I understand," said Geoffry, after a pause. "Would you object to me, Mr. Owen?"

"Somebody else would, sir; and that's quite enough for me," was Robert Owen's answer.

"Who else would?"

"Mr. Clanwaring, you must know who, better than I can tell you. Your father, Sir Dene."

"Maria is one that a prince might be proud to wed," said Geoffry in his foolish impulsiveness.

Upon that, Mr. Owen spoke; and very sensibly. Unequal marriages never did good in the end, he said. Moreover he could not, and would not, have both his daughters wedding above their proper station.

"Your elder daughter has not wedded above her station," said Geoffry, resentfully.

"Indeed but she has, sir. You must see it for yourself."

"I'm sure George Arde is poor enough, Mr. Owen."

"Too poor. But he's a gentleman. And—suppose he were ever to come into Arde Hall? Not that there's much chance of it."

"Not a bit of chance. Old Arde says he shall never leave it to either kith or kin—the old skinflint! It would be a jolly good thing for George Arde and his wife if they got it."

"Well, I had rather Polly had married in her own station—a farmer, say, as I am. But, in regard to you, Mr. Clanwaring, there must be no thought of anything of the kind. Your father would never forgive you."

"If my father approved, would you approve, Mr. Owen?"

"Pardon me, sir, but that's a useless question to go into. Sir Dene never would approve."

"You can answer it for my own satisfaction," returned Geoffry, his pleasant, good-natured eyes going out beseechingly to the farmer's. "If things were smoothed for it in other quarters, and Sir Dene were willing, do you think well enough of me to give me Maria?"

"Yes, I do," was the honest answer. "I like you very much. But

that's all beside the question, Mr. Clanwaring, as you well know, and we must go back to the starting point. There must be no thought of intimacy between you and Maria. If I saw an approach to anything of the sort, sir, I should feel that it lay in my duty to Sir Dene to forbid you my premises."

"Very well; perhaps you are right," answered Geoffry, slowly coming to reason. "I confess that I do like Maria; very much: but I should not care to bring trouble upon anybody; least of all, on my father. Time may alter things. Good night, Owen."

"You are not offended with me for speaking, Mr. Clanwaring?" said the farmer, as he met Geoffry's offered hand.

"Offended! Indeed no. You have only done what a straightforward man would do. Good night."

"Good night, sir."

Geoffry Clanwaring set off on the run. He had told the gamekeeper to "go on slowly" and he would catch him up. They had a matter of business in hand to-night in the village—of which he had lost sight while lingering with Maria. At the corner which bounded the lane he halted for a moment, half inclined to turn along the road to the right and dash down the pathway opposite the Dene gates. But, as he knew the keeper had taken the long road—for he had to call at the farrier's, and might be waiting there—he went straight on.

A rather lonely, rather narrow, and very hilly road, this. It was but a cross-country road at best; no stage-coaches passed on it. Geoffry went up one hill and down another; the way insensibly winding round always towards the village. In fact, to go from a given point, say the entrance to Arde Hall, right round to Hurst Leet, the highway described a horse-shoe, a circuit of two miles. At the corner of the lower turning, which brought the village straight onwards in the distance, stood the premises of the farrier and horse doctor. Cole was at work in the shed: and Geoffry went to it.

"Has Simmons been here, Cole?"

"Yes, sir; about half an hour ago. He called in to say that one of the horses be ill, and I am to be up the first thing in the morning."

"Mind you are. It's Sir Dene's hunter. Good night."

He went straight on to the village now, passing sundry dwellings, most of them labourers', on either side the road, and arrived at Hurst Leet. Simmons, however, was not to be found anywhere, and Geoffry Clanwaring had had a fruitless walk.

But it has afforded us an opportunity of seeing the road that Sir Dene was waging warfare with. That he was projecting this new cutting to avoid—to be called henceforward, as the reader will find, Dene Hollow.

(To be continued.)

GALILEO.

THE first kisses of spring were resting on the banks of the Arno in 1564, when Galileo was born at Pisa. We do not hear that the planets were in any remarkable conjunction at his birth; though they were certainly bound in duty so to be, if ever they were at the entrance of man into the world. His ancestors had sat at Florence among the proudest nobles of the land. But somehow the ducats had contracted a habit of flying out of the family purse. Perhaps the gentlemen were too fond of fine horses and old wine; perhaps the ladies cared more for splendour in the wardrobe than for economy in the kitchen. Retrenchment may have had something to do with the change of the family dwelling from Florence to Pisa. It was no small relief to the household exchequer to be freed from the train of idle servants and the troop of noisy guests who were deemed a necessary part of the state of an Italian palazzo in the sixteenth century.

The little fellow was not long alone in his nursery. A brother and three sisters quickly joined him. We wonder whether the "prophetic eye" of his mother—the Signora Giulia—marked in the face of her eldest born that which told of a higher destiny for him than for the rest of her children. The boy soon showed an eager desire to go to the very bottom of everything he was taught. His father, who seems to have been a man of shrewd sense, encouraged him in this, and told him never to believe anything before he had proved the truth of it himself. It was not in the deeper branches of knowledge alone that he excelled. His father put a lute almost as a plaything into the child's hands, and before he was twenty young Galileo was a skilled musician. He acquired also a most cultivated taste in painting, and in after life many a great artist lent an attentive ear to his criticisms. At one time, indeed, he almost made up his mind to make painting his profession. But this was only one of those spirts off the right road which are generally taken by genius before it settles down steadily into harness.

Part of Galileo's boyhood was spent in the monastery of Vallombrosa, where the monks employed much of their time in educating the young. There, as he wandered through the shadowy cloisters, or amidst the thick foliage of the surrounding woods, he inhaled into his whole being that deep reverence for the Roman Catholic Church which made him cling to her in after life as his dear and holy mother, even when her persecuting hand lay heaviest upon him.

When he was about seventeen he entered the University of Pisa,

where he remained for a few years. It was at this period that his genius first showed its true bent. Mindful of his monastic training, young Galileo was most regular in his attendance at the Cathedral services; but during the sermons of the canons, and the elaborate performances of the choir, the lad could not help glancing up very often at the lamp which hung from the cathedral roof. By degrees his eyes got a habit of always fixing themselves upon it. No doubt the fair maids of Pisa, as they knelt around, rosary in hand, were very indignant even in the midst of their prayers that this good looking young Galileo should stare at the cathedral roof instead of at their faces. But still the youth gazed on. The lamp swung gently to and fro in the currents of air that passed through the large building. That oscillating movement Galileo watched until he had evolved out of it an idea for making an instrument to count the pulse.

The young artificer set at once to work, nor did he stop till he had given shape to the picture conceived in his mind. His invention got spread abroad, and doctors from the neighbouring cities came to examine it. The narrower minds among the faculty smiled superciliously at what they termed the lad's ingenious toy, but the larger ones spoke words of honest praise, and many of them adopted the instrument. Thus was the name of Galileo already whispered through Tuscany.

Made bold by this success, Galileo now began to give lectures, in which he put forth certain new opinions of his own in mathematics and science. This was too much for the Dons of the Pisan University. The mere notion of one of their students having a thought in his head which they had not drummed into it was enough to take away their appetites for a month. For a short time they were speechless from horror, then they burst forth into such a storm of invective that young Galileo soon began to find the placé too hot for him. Partly through the interest of friends, and partly through his own budding fame, the mathematical professorship at the University of Padua was about this time offered to him, and he gladly accepted it, and left his native city.

The young professor was hardly seated in his chair, when news reached him of his father's death. This brought upon him a vast amount of private worry. The position of an eldest son in an Italian family of that day was no sinecure. He had all the responsibilities of a father with very little of the authority. His brother, misnamed Michel Angelo, was one of those worthless rolling stones to be met with in most families. He had some talent as a lute player, and might by means of it have maintained himself honourably. But he was always getting out of employment or into debt, and always rolling back on to his brother's shoulders. Then there was a brother-in-law clamouring for his bride's dowry, and a sister who would not be a nun, and would be a wife. The trouble and expense of all this fell on Galileo, with only

the help of a little feeble counsel from his mother, Madonna Giulia, who seems to have been perfectly bewildered by the many claims of her children.

Galileo remained as mathematical professor at Padua till he was past forty, his fame increasing year by year. His lecture-room was crowded, and many scions of noble and even princely houses were among his pupils. Inventions, which to this day make part of the comforts of our daily lives, leaped one after another from his creative brain. Of these the most important were the thermometer and the telescope. His name rang through Europe. The sprightly dames of Paris, when a telescope was brought to the French Court, forgot their stately etiquette and their silken robes, and fairly scrambled for a first look through it. Foreign sovereigns wooed him to enter their brilliant service. Learned men from all lands flocked to Padua, to sit at his feet.

Having thus, by means of the telescope, brought the heavens close to his view, Galileo began his long series of astronomical discoveries, and each year the men of earth were made familiar with some new wonder of the sky.

Galileo, in this the season of his highest prime, is a grand picture of human intellect. We see the great astronomer in his observatory; his majestic head, with its crown of chestnut hair, is thrown back as he looks through the telescope. His eyes flash as some fresh planet dawns upon him, and his strongly-built frame trembles with nervous energy. By and by a man, stately and gracious as a prince, strolls familiarly in, and, laying his hand caressingly on the astronomer's shoulder, asks if his caro Galileo has a new world to show him to-night. This is Penelli, a Paduan noble, the most accomplished scholar and gentleman in Italy. Next a brisk step is heard on 'he stairs of the observatory, and a clear manly laugh rings in through the door. He who is now come to disturb the astronomer's vigil is indeed a merry fellow. Sly humour plays around his mouth; satire lurks in every line of his face; fun dances in his eyes. Sagredo, the most whimsical of Venetian wits, is at Galileo's side. But who is he who now comes in? He wears a monk's cowl, but his bearing is that of a soldier. There is a fire in his eyes which makes us shrink back as he draws near, and yet there is an honest courage in his face which attracts us. There are those in Venice by whom this man is adored as a god, but there are also those in Venice who would give their own hearts' blood for their poniards to drink his. He is Sarpi, the champion of Venetian freedom, who met undaunted alike the thunders of Rome, and the fell swoop of the Austrian eagle. These were spirits worthy to hold communion with the great astronomer.

Galileo never married. The trouble his own family caused him in early life seems to have had a pernicious effect on him, in making him dread and avoid having a lawful wife and children. The mother of his son Vincenzio and of his two daughters—Polissena and Virginia—was

Marina Di Gamba, a Venetian woman of low birth. We may blame Galileo, but we must not forget the times he lived in. Marina does not seem to have had any strong affection for her great lover, and in a few years, when an opportunity offered itself, married well in her own rank of life. The light way in which such things were thought of in that day in Italy is proved by a letter which is extant from Marina's husband to Galileo. He thanks the professor warmly for his wife's dowry, and speaks quite affectionately of Galileo's little daughter Polissena.

With his horror of domestic shackles the thought that these children had no right to be a burden to him was doubtless uppermost in Galileo's mind when he first became a parent. These helpless little ones had no legal claim upon him, and who in the Italy of his day thought any the worse of a man for neglecting his illegitimate offspring? The good heart of Galileo, however, raised him in this case above the low moral standard of his time. As soon as the prattle of his children began to reach his ears, all the father awoke within him. He took them away from their now married mother, around whom new interests were quickly springing up, and henceforth they became the objects of his constant care.

Galileo was very far beyond his age in his disbelief in astrology. He did, indeed, sometimes cast the horoscopes of his friends to please them; but he did it with a mocking air.

When Galileo was passing the boundaries of middle-age the Grand Duke of Tuscany made him very advantageous offers to come and take the place of astronomer royal at his court. The Grand Duke was chiefly induced to do this by his son Cosmo, a precocious boy, who was never satiated with hearing of the discoveries of Galileo, and who wanted to have the wonderful man near him that he might become his pupil. His ceaseless energy was already beginning to tell upon Galileo both in body and mind. How could it be otherwise with his long night vigils, and the gigantic nature of his brain work? He had bad attacks of illness and fits of low spirits, during which a dark cloud rested on his great intellect. The salary promised by the Grand Duke was as large as that which he now earned. Freedom from the work of the professorship would be a great relief to him. He therefore gladly accepted the offer, and removed with his children to Florence.

Soon after he was settled there Galileo took it into his head (no doubt in one of the fits of hypochondria already mentioned) that it would be much better for his daughters never to know anything of the world. He therefore took them to a convent of Franciscan nuns at Arcetri, near Florence, and requested that they might at once make there their profession.

The abbess at first demurred, saying that no novice was allowed to take the vows before she was sixteen. Galileo, however, urged his point, and the abbess, hoping to find in the astronomer royal a rich and

potent patron for her needy convent, consented to try to do what he wished. In a little while a dispensation was obtained from Rome for making Galileo's daughters nuns before they were women. The two little girls, Polissena and Virginia, the eldest of whom was only thirteen, had their hair cut off, were made to repeat certain words which they did not even understand, were dressed in hoods and veils, and then were told that they were transformed into Sister Maria Celeste and Sister Arcangela. There is little doubt that Galileo soon repented what he had done; more especially when the charms, both of mind and body, of his eldest and best beloved daughter came to maturity.

At Florence Galileo lived an honourable and busy life. He inhabited a pretty villa at Bello Sguardo, where the hum of the city only reached his ear in muffled sounds. There by day he wrote his various books on astronomical or scientific subjects, or worked in his garden—his favourite out-door employment. There he spent the silver Italian nights in reading the heavens from his observatory. There he received his many friends and pupils in a genial informal way. The grand ducal family, especially his pupil, young Cosmo, were never tired of showering upon him honours and ducats. With all their vices these Florentine Medici were right royal patrons of art and science and of letters.

When Galileo had been a few years in Florence he began to assert openly the earth's motion. This had been before discovered by Copernicus, but he never demonstrated it so clearly as Galileo. Copernicus was a German, and in Germany Luther had unfettered Thought, so that she walked at large. There Copernicus had held and taught what theory he pleased. But Galileo was an Italian, and in Italy thought was bound with a chain which was riveted to the chair of St. Peter. Therefore, as soon as he spoke publicly of this new doctrine a score of priests and monks poked their heads out of cell windows and sacristy doors to declare it contrary to Scripture, and, what was worse, to the faith of Holy Church.

To this Galileo answered that he was an earnest and reverent believer in Scripture and an earnest and reverent son of Holy Church, but that both Scripture and Holy Church were meant to teach men religion, and not astronomy. The priests retorted with some rather strong language, and with weak, and we should have thought rather unclerical, puns on Galileo's name, about the men of Galilee gazing up into heaven. Further than this, however, they did not at present molest him, partly probably because of the high favour he stood in with the Grand Duke, and partly because there was as yet no printed evidence of his so-called heresy. He even went to Rome, where he was only lectured a little mildly now and then for his opinions over the wine-cup by Pope and cardinals.

Galileo's son Vincenzio turned out an exact ditto of his uncle Michel

Angelo. The uncle and nephew both married, but their wives and children lived much more in Galileo's house than in their own. The astronomer took this with the most unfailing good temper, and let his quiet be invaded and his larder and cellar be emptied without a word of complaint.

The chief sunshine of Galileo's life at this time was his eldest daughter, the nun Maria Celeste. The church had indeed taken from the world a rare pearl when she appropriated to herself the astronomer's child. Beneath that nun's veil was hidden a wondrous wealth of wit, and heart, and sterling good sense. The nuns, wrapped up in the narrow egotism but too common in cloisters, only guessed dimly at these treasures; her father alone knew the full worth of them. On him was lavished all the love which should by right have been shared among husband and children and familiar friends. It was useless for the abbess to tell Maria Celeste she ought to give herself entirely to heaven; her mind was very much upon earth, for her thoughts were always with her father. She prayed for him when she ought to have been praying for the Pope and the cardinals. She kept for him the most dainty of the sweetmeats she made, instead of selling them for the convent purse. She stitched his shirts when she should have been embroidering altar-cloths. She copied for him his manuscripts when she should have been reading the lives of the saints. In consequence of the Franciscan vow of poverty the poor nuns at Arcetri often knew what it was to lack a good meal and to shiver for want of fire. The constitution of Maria Celeste was weakly, and could bear but ill such a life. She constantly suffered in her head from what would we believe in the medical light of the present day have been called neuralgia. Galileo was always providing her with little comforts to make her life more bearable; and, indeed, his charity to the whole convent quite realized the hopes conceived by the abbess when she first admitted his daughter. We like to fancy the kindly liberal-handed old astronomer in the convent parlour, with all the sisters chattering round him and preferring their simple requests.

And now we come to the last and darkest, but best known scene of the great astronomer's life.

When he was hard upon seventy Galileo published a volume of "Dialogues," in which he maintained the truth of the new system of astronomy and proved the fallacy of the old. His friends had warned him against taking this dangerous step. He, however, persisted, and the moment the book was out the Jesuits pounced upon it. They had long hated Galileo. They had long been waiting to be able to make out a strong case against him. He was, in their opinion, just the sort of man to be feared and hunted down.

The Pope at that time was Urban the Eighth. Hitherto he had been well-disposed to Galileo. The Jesuits, however, managed to poison

the pontiff's mind by telling him that the solemn fool of the "Dialogues" was meant for his holiness himself. His vanity being thus called up into arms, Urban was as violent as the Jesuits against the astronomer. The circulation of the book was stopped, and Galileo was cited to appear at Rome before the Inquisition on charge of heresy.

After that day he was never the Galileo of former times. He was, however, cheered by the noisy sympathy of his many pupils, and soothed by the softer tones of woman. His daughter wrote him words of Christian resignation. Caterina Nicolini, the wife of the Florentine ambassador at Rome, took him into her own house, and thought it no disgrace to her noble blood to wait upon and tend him. Maria Tedaldi, the most vivacious dame in vivacious Florence, triumphantly established the supremacy of the female tongue over even popes and cardinals by declaring that Galileo had been always right, and was now right, and would be right to the end.

At length he was allowed to return to Florence, but the Argus eyes of the Inquisition watched him till he was in his grave. His daughter's weak health had given way under the anxiety she had suffered for him. The sweet girl lived to kiss him once again, and then went away to the angels of her convent dreams. The lonely old man wept her bitterly; but the law of perpetual motion, which rules genius as well as planets, made him go on working. He was still busy with his pen and in his observatory. Three or four years before his death he was quite blind: as great an affliction for Galileo the astronomer, as deafness was for Haydn the musician. His last days were brightened by visits from the grand ducal family, and by the devotion of Viviani, his favourite pupil, who took his unworthy son's place. At length, in 1642, the soul of the great astronomer ascended to its in truth native stars.

ALICE KING.



DAVID GARTH'S GHOST.

"IS it true she's going to marry him, Miss Timmens?"

"True! I don't know," retorted Miss Timmens, in wrath. "It won't be for the lack of warning, if she does. I told her so last night; and she tossed her head in answer. She's a vain, heartless girl, Hannah Baber, with no more proper prudence about her than a female ostrich."

"There may be nothing in it, after all," said Hannah. "She is generally ready to flirt, you know."

"Flirt!" shrieked Miss Timmens in her shrillest tone. "She'd flirt with a two-legged wheelbarrow if it had trousers on."

This colloquy was taking place at the private door of the school-house—a long, low building that travellers through North Crabb mostly took for a barn. Hannah, who had gone down from Crabb Cot on an errand, came upon Miss Timmens standing there to look out. Of course she stayed to gossip.

The object of Miss Timmens's wrath was her niece, Harriet Roe. A vain, showy, handsome, free-natured girl, with bright dark eyes and white teeth—who had helped to work that mischief between Maria Lease and Daniel Ferrar, which had led to Ferrar's dreadful death. Humphrey Roe, Harriet's father, was the half brother of Miss Timmens and Mrs. Hill; he had settled in France, and married a French woman. Miss Harriet chose to call herself French, and politely said the English were not fit to tie that nation's shoes. Perhaps that was why she had now taken up with a cousin, Louis Roe. Not that Louis Roe was really French: he had been born in France of English parents, and so was next door to it. A fashionable-looking young man North Crabb considered him, for he wore well-cut coats and had a moustache. Moustaches were things to be stared at in simple country places then. It may have had something to do with Miss Timmens's dislike of the young man. Louis Roe was but a distant relative: a tenth cousin, or so; of whom Miss Timmens had heard before, but never seen. When he made his unexpected appearance one January day at the school-house, ostensibly to see Harriet, whom he had known in France, Miss Timmens, between surprise and the moustache, was less gracious than she might have been. From that time to this—March—he had (as Miss Timmens put it) haunted the place, though chiefly taking up his abode at Worcester. Harriet had struck into a flirtation with him at once, after her native fashion: and now it was reported that they were going to be married. Miss Timmens could not find out that

he was doing anything for a living. He talked of his fine "affaires" over in France: but when she questioned him of what nature the "affaires" were, he either evaded her like an eel, or gave rambling answers that she could make neither head nor tail of. The way in which they would jabber French together in her presence, not a sound of which language could she comprehend, and the laughing that went on at the same time, put up Miss Timmens's back worse than anything, for she thought they were making game of her. She was a tall, thin woman with a chronic redness in the nose and one cheek, and could be tart when she pleased. Very tart indeed she was, recounting these grievances to Hannah.

"My firm belief, Hannah Baber, is, that he wants to get hold of Harriet for her two hundred pounds. She has got that much, you know. He'd rather play the gentleman than work. If it's not the money, more than Harriet, that he's after, never you believe me again."

"The money may put him into some good way of business, and they may live comfortably together," suggested Hannah.

"Cats may fly," returned Miss Timmens. "There's something in that young man, Hannah Baber, that I could never trust. Oh, but girls are wilful!—and simple, at the best, where the men are concerned! They can't see an inch beyond their noses: no, nor won't let others that have got sight see for 'em. Look there!"

Emerging into the spring sunshine from the shade of the withy walk, came the gentleman in question; Harriet Roe flaunting in her pink ribbons at his side. Miss Timmens gave her door a bang, regardless of good manners, and Hannah pursued her way.

The road being thus paved for it, North Crabb church was not taken by surprise when it heard the marriage banns read out one Sunday morning between Louis Roe, of the parish of St. Swithin, Worcester (it is where he was staying at the time), and Henriette Adèle Marie Roe. Miss Timmens, who had not been taken into confidence, started violently; Mademoiselle Henriette Adèle Marie, sitting by her side, held up her head and her blooming cheeks with unruffled equanimity. It was said there was a scene when they got home: Miss Timmens's sister (once Mrs. Garth, but then our bailiff's wife, James Hill) looking in at the school-house to assist at it. Neither of them could make any thing of Harriet.

"I'll tell you what it is, Aunt Susan and Aunt Nancy," said the girl passionately, when her temper got high, "*my mind is made up to marry Louis*; and if you don't drop this magging now and for good; if you attempt to worry me any further, I'll go off to Worcester, and stay with him till the day comes. There! how would you like that? I will, I declare. It would be thought nothing at all of in my country, with the wedding so near."

This shut them up. Mrs. Hill, a meek, gentle little woman, who

habitually let Miss Timmens do all the talking when they were together, began to cry. Harriet eat her cold dinner standing, and went off for an afternoon promenade with Monsieur Louis. From that time, even Miss Timmens gave up all hope of opposition, seeing that events must take their course. Harriet's parents were dead ; she was over age, and her own mistress in the eye of the law.

"Would you mind taking a turn with me in the withy walk, Harriet Roe?" asked Maria Lease, as they were coming out of church that same night.

Harriet was alone. Louis Roe had gone. The request surprised her considerably. Since Daniel Ferrar's death the past November, Maria had been very distant with her ; averting her head if they happened to meet.

"So you have come to your senses, have you, Maria Lease?" was the half-insolent, half-goodnatured answer. "I'll walk down it with you if you like."

"Come to my senses in what way?" asked Maria, in a low, subdued, sad tone, as they went towards the withy walk.

"About—you know what. You blamed *me* for what happened. As good as laid his death at my door."

"Did you ever hear me say I did?"

"Oh, I could see : your manner was enough. As if I either helped it on—or could have prevented it ! We used to have just a bit of talking and laughing together, he and I, but that was all."

That all ! And the gold chain was still on Harriet's neck. Maria suppressed a sigh.

"Whether I blamed you for it, Harriet Roe, or whether I blamed myself, is of no moment now. The past can never be recalled or redeemed in this world—its remembrance alone remains. I want to do you a little service, Harriet : nothing may come of it, but it is my duty to speak."

Amid the shadows of the withy beds, under the silent stars, Maria spoke, dropping her voice to a whisper. In a sufficiently curious but accidental manner, she had heard something the previous week about Louis Roe. A stranger, who had known him in France, spoke very much in his disfavour ; he said that any girl, if she cared for her future happiness and credit, would be mad to tie herself to him. Maria had asked no particulars ; they might not have been given if she had ; but the impression left on her mind of Louis Roe was not a good one. All this she quietly repeated to Harriet. It was received in anything but a friendly spirit.

"Thank you for nothing, Maria Lease. Because you lost your own husband—that was to have been—you think you'll try what you can do to deprive me of mine. A slice of revenge, I suppose : but it won't succeed."

"Harriet, you are mistaken," rejoined Maria; and Miss Harriet thought she had never in her life heard so mournfully sad a tone as the words were spoken in. "So much self-reproach fell upon me that bitter evening when he was found hanging—and dead; reproach that can never be lifted off me while time shall last, that I do not think I can ever again do an ill turn in this life, or give an unkind word. The whole world does not seem to be as sinful in its wickedness as I was in my harsh unkindness: and there's no manner of expiation for me. If I pass my whole existence laying my hands under other people's feet in humble hope to serve them, it cannot undo the bitter malice of my passion when I exposed him before Johnny Ludlow. The exposure was more than he could bear: and he—he put an end to it. I suffer always, Harriet Roe; my days are one prolonged burning agony of repentance. Repentance that brings no relief."

"My goodness!" cried Harriet, her breath nearly scared away at hearing this, careless-natured though she was. "I'll tell you what, Maria: I should turn Roman Catholic in your place; and let a priest absolve me from the sin."

A priest absolve her from the sin! The strange anguish on her compressed lips was visible as Maria Lease turned her face upwards in the starlight. ONE High, merciful Priest was ever there, who could, and would, wash out her sin. But—what of Daniel Ferrar, who had died in his?

"If there is one whom I would more especially seek to serve in kindness, it is you, Harriet," she resumed, putting her hand gently on Harriet's arm—and her fingers accidentally touched the gold chain that Daniel Ferrar had hung round the girl's neck in his perfidy. "Revenge!—from me!"

"The very idea of my giving up Louis is absurd," was Harriet's rejoinder, as they came out of the withy walk. "Thank you all the same, Maria Lease; and there's my hand. I see now that you meant kindly: but no one shall set me against my promised husband."

Maria shook hands in silence.

"Look here, Maria—don't go and tell your beautiful scandal to sharp Susan Timmens. Not that I care whether you do or not, except on the score of contention. She would strike up fresh opposition, and it might come to scratching and fighting. My temper has borne enough: one can't be a lamb always."

The wedding came off on Easter Tuesday. Harriet wore a bright silk dress, the colour of lilac, and a wreath and veil on her head. When the latter ornaments came home, Miss Timmens nearly fainted. Decent young women in their station of life were married in bonnets, she represented: but Harriet Roe, reared in French customs, said bonnets could never be admissible for a bride, and that she'd sooner go to church in a coal-scuttle. The flaunting Batley girls, in trains and

straw hats, were bridesmaids. Miss Timmens wore a new shawl and white gloves; and poor little David Garth—who was to die of fright before that same year came to an end—stood with his hand locked in his mother's.

And so, in the self-same church where she had sat displaying her graces before the ill-fated Daniel Ferrar, and by the same young clergyman who had preached to her then, Harriet became the wife of her relative, Louis Roe, and went away with him to London.

II.

THE next move in the chain of events was the death of David Garth. It occurred in November. The circumstances will no doubt be remembered by the readers of the *ARGOSY*. James Hill, the boy's stepfather and the Squire's bailiff, was moving into Willow Cottage, and conveyed thither a portion of his household goods. Not thinking it safe to leave them in it alone for the night, he made a bargain with Luke Macintosh that he should sleep there with David. Macintosh (a frightful coward) shuffled out of it at the last moment; Hill locked the boy in alone, and when he went to let him out in the morning, he found David dead. Hill, in his dire fear, said nothing; he concealed the body in a shed until he should have time to bury it, and moved into the cottage with his wife. But in a day or two, it all came to light. Such was the substance of what was told.

And now we go on again. Mrs. Hill refused to stay in the cottage. What with her innate tendency to superstition, with the real facts of the case, and with that strange belief—that David's spirit had appeared to her in the moment of dying: a belief firm and fixed as adamant—she passed into a state of chronic horror of the dwelling. Not another night could she remain in it. The doctor himself, Cole, said she must not. Miss Timmens took her in as a temporary thing; until the furniture could be replaced in their former cottage, which was not let. Hill made no objection to this. For that matter, he seemed afraid of the new place himself, and was glad to get back to the old one. All his native surliness had left him for the time: he was as a subdued man whose tongue has gone away on an excursion. You see, he feared the law might come down upon him. The coroner's inquest had brought in a safe verdict: all Hill got was a censure for having locked the boy in alone: but he could not feel secure that the affair would not be taken up by the magistrates: and the parish said in his hearing that his punishment ought to be transportation at the very least. Altogether, it subdued him.

So, as soon as David's funeral was over, Hill began to move back his goods in a surly kind of humble silence. Crowds collected to see the transport, much to Hill's annoyance and discomfiture. The

calamity had caused intense excitement in the place ; and Miss Timmens, who had a very long tongue, and hated Hill just as much as she had loved David, kept up the ball. Hill's intention was to lock up Willow Cottage until he could get Mr. Todhetley to release him from it. At present he dared not ask : all of us at Crabb Cot, from the Squire downwards, were bitter against him for his wicked inhumanity to poor David. And if you want to know what brought me and Tod staying at home in November, I must tell you that fever had broken out at Dr. Frost's.

Curious to say—curious because of what was to happen out of it—as Hill was loading the truck with the last remaining things, a stranger came up to the door of the cottage. Just at the first moment, Hill did not recognise him ; for he had shaved off his moustache and whiskers, and grown a great beard instead. And that alters people.

“How are you, Hill? What are you up to here?”

It was Louis Roe—who had married Mademoiselle Henriette the previous Easter. Where they had been since, or what they had done, was a kind of mystery, for Harriet had written but one letter. By that, it was gathered that they were flourishing in grandeur in London : but no address was appended, and Miss Timmens had called her a heartless jade, not to want to hear from her best relatives.

Hill answered that he was pretty well, and went on loading ; but said nothing to the other question. Louis Roe—perceiving sundry straggling spectators, who stood peering at all points, as if the loading of a hand-barrow with goods were a raree-show—rather wondered at appearances, and asked again. Hill shortly explained then that they had moved into Willow Cottage ; but his wife found it didn't suit her, and so they were moving back again to the old home.

He went off at a tangent with the truck, before he had well spoken, giving no time for further colloquy. Louis Roe caught sight of young Jim Batley amidst the tag-rag, and heard from him all about what had happened.

“He must be a cruel-natured devil, to leave a timid child all night in a house alone!” was the indignant comment of Mr. Roe ; who, whatever his shortcomings might be, was thought not to be hard-hearted.

“His mother, she see his ghost,” went on Jim Batley. “Leastways, heered it.”

Mr. Roe took no notice of this additional communication. Perhaps ghosts held a low place in his creed—and he appeared to have plunged into a reverie. Starting out of it in a minute or two, he ran after Hill, and began talking to him in a low, business tone.

Hill could not believe his ears. Surely such luck had never befallen a miserable man ! For here was Louis Roe offering to take Willow Cottage off his hands : to become his, Hill's, tenant in it, for a short time. The double rent : this, and that for the old cottage : had been

weighing down Hill's mind half as heavily as David weighed it. Squire Todhetley was a generous man; but Hill felt conscious that he had displeased him too much to expect any favour yet awhile.

"What d'ye want of the cottage?" asked Hill, suppressing all signs of satisfaction. "Be you and Harriet a coming to live down here?"

"We'd like to stay here for a few weeks—say, till the dead of winter's over," replied Roe. "London is a beastly dull place in bad weather; the fogs don't agree with Harriet. I had thought of taking two or three rooms at Birmingham: but I don't know but she'll like this cottage best—if you'll let me have it cheap."

It would be cheap enough. For Hill named but the very moderate rent he had agreed to pay the Squire. Only too glad, was he, to get that. Roe promised to pay him monthly.

North Crabb was electrified at the news. Mr. and Mrs. Roe were coming to stay in the cottage where poor David Garth had just died. No time was lost over it, either. On the following day some hired furniture was put in it, and Harriet herself arrived.

She was looking very ill. And I'm sure if she had appeared in a beard as well as her husband, her face could not have seemed more changed. Not her face only, but her manners. Instead of figuring off in silks and ribbons, finer than the stars, laughing with everybody she met, and throwing her handsome eyes about, she wore only plain things, and went along noticing nobody. Some of the people called it "pride;" Miss Timmens said it was disappointment. The first time Tod and I met her, she never lifted her eyes at all. Tod would have stayed to speak; but she just said, "Good morning, gentlemen," and whisked on.

"I say, Johnny, there's some change there," was Tod's remark, as he turned to look after her.

They had been in the place about a week—and Roe seemed to keep in-doors, or else was away, for nobody ever saw him—when a strange turn arose, that was destined to set the neighbourhood in an uproar. I was running past the school-house one evening at dusk, and saw Maria Lease sitting with Miss Timmens by fire-light, the parlour shutters not being shut. Liking Maria very much—for I always did like her, and always shall—I went bolt in to them. James Hill's wife was also there, right back in the corner. And you'd never guess; no, not though you had tried from then till midsummer; what it was they were whispering about, as though scared out of their seven senses.

David Garth's ghost was haunting Willow Cottage.

Miss Timmens was telling the story; the others listened with open mouths. She began at the beginning again for my benefit.

"I was sitting by myself here about this time last evening, Master Johnny, having dismissed the children, and almost too tired with their worry to get my own tea, when Harriet Roe came gliding in at the

door, looking whiter than a sheet, and startling me beyond everything. 'Aunt Susan,' says she in so indistinct a tone that I should have boxed one of the girls for using it, 'would you take pity on me and let me stay here till to-morrow morning? Louis went away this afternoon, and I dare not stop alone in the place all night.' 'What are you afraid of?' I asked, not telling her at once that she might stay; but down she sat, and threw her mantle and bonnet off—taking French leave. I never saw *her* in such a state before," continued Miss Timmens vehemently; "shivering and shaking as if she had an ague fit, and not a particle of her impudence left in her. 'I think that place must be damp with the willow brook, aunt,' says she; 'it gives me a sensation of cold.' 'Now don't you talk nonsense about your willow brooks, Harriet Roe,' says I. 'You are not a shaking for willow brooks, or for cold either, but from fright. What is it?' 'Well then,' says she, plucking up a bit, and putting her hands across her knees to keep 'em still, 'I'm afraid of seeing the boy.' 'What boy?' says I—'not David?' 'Yes; David,' she says, and trembles worse than ever. 'He appeared to Aunt Nancy; a sign he's not at rest; and he's as sure to be in the house as sure can be. Dying in it in the way he did, and lying hid in the shed as he did, what else is to be expected?' Well, Master Johnny, this all seemed to me very odd," continued Miss Timmens. "It struck me, sir, there was more behind. 'Harriet,' says I, 'have you *seen* David Garth?' But at first no satisfactory answer could I get from her, neither yes nor no. At last she said she had not seen him, but knew she should if she stayed in the house by herself at night, for he came again, and was *in* it. It struck me she was speaking falsely; and that she *had* seen him; or what she took for him."

"I know she has; I feel convinced of it," spoke up poor Mrs. Hill, tilting back her black bonnet—the mourning worn for David—to wipe the tears from her eyes. "Master Ludlow, don't smile, sir—though it's best perhaps for the young to disbelieve these solemn things. As surely as that we are talking here, my dear boy's spirit came to me in the moment of his death. I feared it might take to haunt the cottage, sir; and that's why I could not stay in it."

"Yes: Harriet has seen him," interposed Maria Lease in a low, firm tone. "Just as I saw Daniel Ferrar. Master Johnny, *you* know I saw *him*."

Well, truth to say, I thought she must have seen Daniel Ferrar. Having assisted at the sight—or if not at the actual sight, at the place and time and circumstances attending it—I did not see how else it was to be explained away.

"Where's Harriet now?" I asked.

"She stayed here last night, and went off by rail this morning to her grandmother's at Worcester," replied Miss Timmens. "Mother'll be glad of her for a day or so, for she keeps her bed still."

"Then who is in the cottage?"

"Nobody, sir. It's locked up. Roe is expected back to-morrow."

Miss Timmens began to set her tea-things, and I left them. Who should I come upon in the road, but Tod—who had been over to South Crabb. I told him all this; and we took the broad path home through the fields, which led us past Willow Cottage. The fun Tod made of what the women had been saying, was beyond everything. A dreary dwelling, it looked; cold, and deserted, and solitary in the dusky night, on which the moon was rising. The back lay towards Crabb Ravine; to the three-cornered grove in which Daniel Ferrar took his own life away; and to the barn where Maria had seen him after death. In the front was the large field, bleak and bare; and, beyond, the scattered chimneys of North Crabb. A lively dwelling altogether!—let alone what had just happened in it to little David Garth. I said so.

"Yes, it's a lively spot!" acquiesced Tod. "Beautifully lively in itself, without getting the reputation of being haunted. Eugh! Let's get home to dinner, Johnny."

Mr. and Mrs. Coney and Tom came in after dinner. Old Coney and the Squire smoked till tea-time. When tea was over we all sat down to Pope Joan. Mr. Coney kept mistaking hearts for diamonds, clubs for spades; he had not got his spectacles, and I offered to fetch them. Upon that, he set upon Tom for being lazy and letting Johnny Ludlow do what it was his place to do. The result was, that Tom Coney and I had a race which should reach the farm first. The night was a bright one, the moon high. Coming back with the spectacles, a man encountered us, tearing along at the same rate we were. And that was like mad.

"Halloa!" cried Tom. "What's up?"

Tom had cause to ask it. The man was Luke Macintosh: and never in all my life had I seen a specimen of such intense terror. His hair was lank, his face white, his breath came in gasps. Without saying with your leave or by your leave, he caught hold of Tom Coney's arm.

"Master, as I be a living sinner, I ha' just seen Davy Garth."

"Seen David Garth!" echoed Tom, wondering whether Luke had been drinking.

"I see him as plain as plain. He be at that end window o' the Willow Cottage."

"Do you mean his ghost, or himself?" asked Tom, making game of it.

"Why his ghost, in course, sir. It's well known his self be dead and buried. Mercy on us!—I'd ha' lost a month's wages rather nor see this."

Considering Luke Macintosh was so great a coward that he would not go through the Ravine after nightfall, this was not much from him. Neither had his conscience been quite easy since David's death: as it

may be said that he, through refusing at the last moment to sleep in the house, had been in a degree the remote cause of it. His account was this : Passing the Willow Cottage on his way from North Crabb, he happened to look up at the end window, and saw David standing there all in white in the moonlight. That he had made short work of it from thence home, the state of his hair proved. What with running and what with fright, you might have combed the wet out of it.

"I never see nothing plainer in all my born days, never," gasped Luke. "His poor little face hadn't got no more colour in it nor chalk. Drat all them ghosts and goblins, then ! What does they come and show theirselves to decent folk for ?"

He was trembling just as Miss Timmens, some three hours before, had described Harriet Roe to have trembled. An idea flashed into my mind.

"Now, Luke, just you confess—who is it that has put this into your head ?" I asked. But Luke only stared at me : he seemed not to understand.

"Somebody has been telling you this to-night at North Crabb."

"Telling me what, Master Ludlow ?" he jerked out.

"That David Garth is haunting the cottage. It is what people are saying, Tom," I added to Coney.

"Then Master Johnny, I never heered a blessed syllable on't," he replied ; and so earnestly that it was not possible to disbelieve him. "Nobody have said nothing to me. For the matter o' that, I didn't stop to talk to a soul, but just put Molly's letter in the slit—which was what I went for—and turned back again. I wish the woman had ha' been skinned afore she'd got me to go off to the post for her to-night. Plague on me, to have took the way past the cottage !—as if the road warn't good enough to ha' served me !—and a sight straighter !"

"Were there lights in the cottage, Luke ?" asked Coney. "Did you see the Roes about ?"

"There warn't no more sign o' light or life a-nigh the place, Mr. Tom, nor if they'd all been dead and buried inside it."

"It is shut-up, Tom," I said. "Roe and his wife are away."

"*Lawk* a mercy !—not a living creature in it but the ghost !" quaked Luke.

As I have said, this was not much from Luke, taking what he was into consideration ; but it was to be confirmed by others. One of the Coneys' maidservants came along, as we stood there, on her way from North Crabb. A sensible, respectable woman, with no nonsense about her in general ; but she looked nearly as scared as Luke now.

"You don't mean to say *you* have seen it, Dinah ?" cried Tom, staring at her.

"Yes, I have, sir."

"What ! seen David Garth ?"

"Well, I suppose it was him. It was something at the window, in white, that looked like him, Mr. Tom."

"Did you go on purpose to look for it, Dinah?" asked Tom, ironically.

"The way I happened to go was this, sir. James Hill overtook me coming out of North Crabb: he was going up to Willow Cottage to speak to Roe; and I thought I'd walk with him, instead of taking the road. Not but what he's a beauty to walk with, *he* is, after his cruelty to his wife's boy," broke off Dinah: "but company is company on a solitary road at night. When we got to the cottage, Hill knocked; I stayed a minute to say How d'ye do to Mrs. Roe, for I've not seen her yet. Nobody answered the door; the place looked all dark and empty. 'They must have went out for the evening, I should think,' says Hill: and with that he steps back and looks up at the windows. 'Lord be good to us! what's that?' says he, when he had got round where he could see the end casement. I went to him, and found him standing like a pump, just as stiff and upright, his hands clutched hold on the pales, and his eyes staring up at the panes in mortal terror. 'What is it?' says I. 'It's Davvy,' says he; but the voice didn't sound like Hill's voice, and it scared me a bit. 'Yes, it's him,' says Hill; 'he have got on the sheet as was wrapped round him to carry him to the shed. I—I lodged him again that there window to make the turning; the stairs was awk'ard,' went on Hill, as if he was speaking again the grain, but couldn't help himself. And sure enough, Mr. Tom—sure enough, Master Ludlow, there was David."

"Nonsense, Dinah!" cried Tom Coney.

"I saw him quite well, sir, in the white sheet," said Dinah. "The moon was a shining on the window a'most as bright as day."

"It were brighter nor day," eagerly put in Luke Macintosh. "You'll believe me now, Mr. Tom."

"I'd not believe it if I saw it," said Tom Coney.

"As we stood looking up, me a laying hold of Hill's arm," resumed Dinah, as if she had not told all her tale, "there came a loud whistling and shouting behind. Which was young Jem Batley, bringing some message from them sisters of his to Harriet Roe. I bade him hush his noise, but he only danced and mocked at me: so then I told him the cottage was empty, except for David Garth. That hushed him. He came stealing up, and stood by me, staring. You should have seen his face change, Mr. Tom."

"Was he frightened?"

"Frightened is hardly the word for it, sir. His teeth began to chatter as if he'd got a fit; and down he went at last like a stone, his face first, and howling fearful. We couldn't hardly get him up again to come away, me and Hill. And as to the ghost, Mr. Tom, it *was* still there."

"Well, it is a queer tale," acknowledged Tom Coney.

"We made for the road, all three of us then; I came on here—and I didn't half like coming by the barn where Maria Lease saw Daniel Ferrar," candidly added Dinah. "T'other two went on their opposite way, Jim never letting go of Hill's coat tails."

There was no more Pope Joan that night. We carried the story indoors; and I mentioned also what had been said at Miss Timmens's. The Squire and old Coney laughed.

With David Garth's ghost to be seen, it could not be supposed that I, or Tod, or Tom Coney, should stay away from the sight. When we got to the place, some twenty people had collected round the house. Jim Batley had told the tale in North Crabb.

But they had seen nothing. Neither did we. For the bright night had changed to one of darkness. A huge curtain of cloud had come up from the south, covering the moon and the best part of the sky, as a pall covers a coffin. If gazing could have brought a ghost to the window, there would assuredly have been one. The casement was at the end of the house; serving to light the narrow up-stairs passage. A huge cherry tree hid the casement in summer; in a slight degree its bare branches obscured it now.

A sound, as of some panting animal, grew up beside me as I leaned on the side palings. I turned; and saw the bailiff. Some dreadful power of fascination had brought him back again, contrary to his will.

"So it's gone, Hill, you see."

"It's not gone, Mr. Johnny," was his answer. "For some of our sights, it'll never go away again. You look well at the right hand side, sir, and see if you don't see some'at white there."

Peering steadily, I thought I did see something white—as of a face above a white garment. But it might have been fancy.

"Us as saw *him* couldn't mistake it for fancy," was Hill's rejoinder. "There was three on us: me, and Dinah up at Coney's, and that there imp of a Jim Batley."

"Somebody saw it before you did, Hill. At least he says so. Luke Macintosh. He was scared out of his senses."

The effect of these words on Hill was such, that I quite believed he was scared out of *his*. He clasped his hands in wild emotion, and turned up his eyes to give thanks.

"It's ret'ibution a working out of its ends, Mr. Ludlow. See it first, did he! And I hope to my heart he'll see it afore his eyes evermore. If that there Macintosh had not played a false and coward's game, no harm 'ud ha' come to Davvy."

The crowd increased. The Squire and old Coney came up: and told the whole assemblage that they were born idiots. Of course—with nothing to be seen—it looked as though we all were that. In the midst of it, making quietly for the back door, as though he had come

home through Crabb Ravine, I espied Louis Roe. Saying nothing to anybody, I went round and told him.

"David Garth's ghost in the place!" he exclaimed. "Why it will frighten my wife to death. Of course there's nothing of the kind; but women are so foolishly timid."

I said his wife was not there. Roe took a key from his pocket, unlocked the back door, and went in. He was talking to me and I stepped over the threshold to the kitchen, into which the door opened. He began feeling on the shelf for matches, and could not find any.

"There's a box in the bedroom I know," he said; and went stumbling up stairs.

Down he came, after a minute or so, with the matches, struck one, and lighted a candle. Opening the front door, he showed himself, explained that he had just come home, and complained of the commotion.

"There's no such things in this lower world as ghosts," says Roe. "Whoever pretends to see them must be either drunk or mad. As to this house—well, some of you had better walk in and re-assure yourselves. You are welcome."

He was taken at his word. A few came in, and went looking about for the ghost, upstairs and down. Telling of it now, it seems to have been the most ridiculous thing in the world. Nothing was to be found. The narrow passage above, where David had stood, was empty. "As if supernatural visitants waited while you looked after them!" cried the superstitious crowd outside.

It is easier to raise a disturbance of this kind than to allay it, and the ghost-seers stayed on. The heavy cloud in the heavens rolled away by and by; the moon came out, and shone on the casement again. But neither David Garth nor anything else was then to be seen there.

III.

THE commotion of the night passed away; but not the rumours. That David Garth's spirit could not rest, but came back to trouble the earth, especially that spot of it known as Willow Cottage, was accepted as a fact. People would go stealing up there at night, three or four of them arm-in-arm, and stand staring up at the casement and walk round the cottage. Nothing more was to be seen—perhaps because there was no moon to light the window up. Harriet Roe was at home again with her husband; but she did not go much abroad: and her face seemed to have a sort of uneasy terror on it. "It's the fear of seeing *him* that's wearing her heart out; why does Roe stop in the place?" said North Crabb: and though Harriet had never been much of a favourite, she got plenty of sympathy now.

It came to be known in a gradual sort of way that a visitor was staying at Willow Cottage. A young woman fashionably dressed, who

was called Mrs. James; and who was said to be the wife of James Roe, Louis Roe's elder brother. Some people declared that a man was also there: they had seen one. Harriet denied it. An acquaintance of her husband's, a Mr. Duffy, had been over to see them from Birmingham, she said, but he went back again. She was not believed.

What with the ghost, and what with the mystery attaching to its inhabitants, Willow Cottage was a great card just then. If you ask me to explain what mystery there could be, I cannot: all I know is, an idea that there was something of the kind, apart from David, dawned upon many minds in North Crabb. Miss Timmens spoke of it openly. She did not like Harriet's looks, and said that something or other was killing her. And Susan Timmens considered it her duty to try and come to the bottom of it.

At all kinds of hours, seasonable and unseasonable, she presented herself at Willow Cottage. Rarely alone. Sometimes Mrs. Hill would be with her—and a nice shaking state the visit would put *her* into; or it would be Maria Lease; or one of the Batley girls; and once it was young Jim. Louis Roe got to feel annoyed at this; he told Harriet he would not have confounded people coming there, prying; and he closed the door against them. So, the next time Miss Timmens went, she found the door bolted in the most inhospitable manner. Harriet threw open the parlour window to talk to her.

"Louis says he won't have any more visitors calling here just now; not even you, Aunt Susan."

"What does he say that for?" snapped Miss Timmens.

"We came down here to be quiet: he has some account books to go over, and can't be disturbed at them. So perhaps you'll stay away, Aunt Susan. I'll come to the school-house sometimes instead."

It was the dusk of evening, but Miss Timmens could see the frightful look of illness on Harriet's face. She was trembling also.

"Harriet, what's the matter with you?" she asked in a kinder tone. "Nothing."

"*Nothing!* Why you are looking as ill as you can look. All your limbs are shaking."

"It's true I don't feel over well this evening, aunt, but I think it's nothing. I often feel as if I'd got a touch of ague."

Miss Timmens bent her face nearer; it had a strange concern in it. "Harriet, look here. There's some mystery about this place; won't you tell me what it is? I—seem—to—be—afraid—for—*you*," she concluded, in a slow and scarcely audible whisper.

For answer, Miss Timmens found the window slammed down in her face. An impression arose—she hardly knew whence gathered, or whether it had any foundation—that it was not Harriet who had slammed it, but somebody concealed behind the curtain.

"Well I'm sure!" cried she.

"It was so cold, aunt!" Harriet called out apologetically through the glass. "Good night."

Miss Timmens walked off in dudgeon. Revolving matters along the broad field-path, she liked less and less the appearance of things. Harriet was looking as ill as it was possible to look: and what meant that trembling? Was it caused by sickness of body, or terror of mind? Mrs. Hill, when consulted, summed it up comprehensively: "It's David about the place: *that's* killing her."

Harriet Roe did not make her appearance at the school-house, and the next day but one Miss Timmens went up again. The door was bolted. Miss Timmens knocked, but got no answer. Not choosing to be treated in that way, she made so much noise, first at the door and then at the window, that the former was at length unclosed by Mrs. James, in list shoes and a dressing-gown, as if her toilette had been delayed that day. The chain was kept up—a new chain that Miss Timmens had not seen before—and she could not get in.

"I want to see Harriet, Mrs. James."

"Harriet's gone," replied Mrs. James.

"Gone! Gone where?"

"To London. She went off there yesterday morning."

Miss Timmens felt, as may be said, struck into herself. An idea flashed over her that the words had not a syllable of truth in them.

"What did she go to London for?"

Mrs. James glanced over her two shoulders, seemingly in terror herself, and sunk her voice to a whisper. "She had got afraid of the place, this dark-winter weather. Miss Timmens—it's as true as you're there—nothing would persuade her out of the fancy that she was always seeing David Garth. He used to stand in a sheet at the end of the upstairs passage and look at her—leastways, *she* said so."

This nearly did for Miss Timmens. It might be true; and she could not confute it. "Do *you* see him, Mrs. James?"

"Well no; I never have. Goodness knows, I don't want to."

"But Harriet was not well enough for a long journey," contended Miss Timmens. "She never could have undertaken one in her state."

"I don't know what you mean by 'state,' Miss Timmens. She would shake a bit at times; but we saw nothing else the matter with her here. Perhaps *you* would shake if you'd got an apparition in the house. Any way, well or ill, she went off to London. Louis took her as far as the station and saw her away."

"Will you give me her address? I should like to write to her."

Mrs. James said she could not give the address, because she did not know it. Nothing more was to be got out of her, and Miss Timmens reluctantly departed.

"I should hope they've not murdered her—and are concealing her

in the house as Hill concealed David," was the comment she gave vent to in her perplexity and wrath.

From that time, nothing could be heard of Harriet Roe. A week went on ; nearly two ; but she never was seen, and no tidings came of her. So far as could be ascertained, she had not gone away by train : neither station-master nor porter remembered to have seen her. Miss Timmens grew as thin a ghost herself : the subject worried her night and day. That some ill had happened to Harriet ; or been *done* to her, she did not doubt. Once or twice she got to see Roe ; once or twice Mrs. James : speaking to them at the door with the barring chain between. Roe said he heard from his wife nearly every other day ; but he would not show the letters, or give the address : a conclusive proof to the mind of Miss Timmens that neither had existence. *What had they done with Harriet ?* Miss Timmens could not have been in much worse mental trouble had she herself made away with her.

One morning the postman delivered a letter at the school-house. It bore the London post-mark, and purported to be from Harriet. A few lines only—saying she was well and enjoying herself, and should come back sometime—the writing shaky and blotted, and bearing but a slight resemblance to hers. Miss Timmens dashed it on the table.

"The fools, to think they can deceive me this way ! That's no more Harriet's writing than it's mine."

But Miss Timmens's passion soon subsided into a grave, settled, awful dread. For she saw that this had been written to delude her into the false belief that Harriet was in health and life—when she might be in neither one nor the other. She brought the letter to Crabb Cot. She took it round the parish. She went with it to the police-station ; imparting her views of it to all freely. It was a sham ; a blind ; a forgery : and *where* was she to look for poor lost Harriet Roe ?

That same evening the ghost appeared again. Miss Timmens and others went up to the cottage, intending to demand an interview with Roe ; and they found the house shut up, apparently deserted. Reconnoitring the windows from all points, their dismayed eyes rested on something at the end casement : a thin, shadowy form, robed in white. Every one of them saw it ; but, even as they looked, it seemed to vanish away. Yes, there was no question but the house was haunted. Perhaps Harriet had died from fright, as poor David died.

Things could not go on like this for ever. After another day or two of discomfort, Mr. Todhetley, as a county magistrate, incited to it by the public feeling in the parish, issued a private mandate for Roe to appear before him, that he might be questioned as to what had become of his wife. It was not a warrant ; but a kind of friendly invitation, that could offend nobody. Jiff the policeman was entrusted with the delivery of the message, a verbal one, and I went with him.

As if she had scented out the time for herself, and wanted to make a third, who should meet us in the broad path, but Miss Timmens. The cottage might or might not be haunted, but I am sure her legs were: they couldn't be still.

"What are you doing up here, Jiff?" she tartly asked.

Jiff told her. Squire Todhetley wanted Roe at Crabb Cot.

"It will be of no use, Jiff; the door's sure to be fast," groaned Miss Timmens. "My opinion is, Roe has left the place for good."

Miss Timmens was mistaken. The shutters were open, and the house showed signs of life. Upon knocking at the door—Miss Timmens took off her patten to do it, and you might have heard the echoes at North Crabb—it was flung wide by Mrs. James.

Mr. Roe? No, Mr. Roe was not at home. Mrs. Roe was.

Mrs. Roe was!

Yes. If we liked to walk in and see her, we could do so.

By the kitchen fire, as being the biggest and hottest, in a chair stuffed about with blankets, sat Harriet Roe. Worn, white, shadowy, she was evidently just getting over some desperate illness. I stared; the policeman softly whistled; you might have blown Miss Timmens down with a feather.

"Good patience, child! Why where have you been hiding all this while?—and what on earth has been the matter with you?"

"I have been up stairs in my room, Aunt Susan, keeping my bed. As to the illness, it turned out to be ague and low fever."

Jiff went out again; there was nothing to stay for. I followed; leaving Miss Timmens and Harriet to have it out together.

She had really been ill in bed all the while, Mrs. James and Roe attending on her. It did not suit them to admit visitors, for James Roe, who had fallen into some difficulty in London connected with forged bills, was lying concealed at Willow Cottage. It would not have done by any means for Miss Timmens and her sharp eyes to go up stairs and catch a glimpse of him; so they concocted the tale that Harriet was away. James Roe was safe away now, and Louis with him. Louis had been mixed up in the bill trouble in a less degree: but quite enough so to induce him to absent himself from London for a time: and that's why he came down to stay quietly at North Crabb.

"Was it fear, or ague that caused you to shake so that evening?" questioned Miss Timmens.

"Ague. I never got out of my bed after that night. I could hardly write that letter, aunt, that Louis sent to London to be posted to you."

"And—did you really see David Garth?"

"No, I never saw him," said Harriet. "But, after all the reports and talk, I was timid at being in the house alone—James and his wife had not come then—and that's why I asked you to let me stay at

the school-house one night. My husband says the ghost is all rubbish and fancy, Aunt Susan."

"Rubbish and fancy, does he!"

"He says that when he came in here with Johnny Ludlow, the night there was that commotion, in going up for some matches, he fell over something at the top of the stairs by the end casement, and flung it behind the rafters. Next day he saw what it was. I had tied a white cloth over a small dwarf mop to sweep the walls with, and must have left it near the window. I remembered that I did leave it there. It no doubt looked in the moonlight just like a white face. And that's what was taken for David's ghost."

Miss Timmens paused, considering matters: she might believe just as much of this as she liked.

"It appeared again at the same place, Harriet, two or three days ago."

"That was me, aunt. I saw you all looking up, and drew away again for fear you should know me. Mrs. James was making my bed, and I had crawled there."

There it ended. So far, the mystery was over. The explanation was confided to the public, who received it differently. Some accepted the mop version; others clung unflinchingly to the ghost. And Hill never got a penny of his rent.

Mrs. James wanted to leave; and Maria Lease took her place as nurse. Tenderly she did it, too; and Harriet got well. She was going off to join her husband: it was said in France. Nobody knew: unless it was Maria Lease. She and Harriet had become confidential friends.

"Which is the worst fate—yours, or mine?" cried Harriet to Maria, half mockingly, half woefully mournful, the day she was leaving. "You with your lonely life, and your never-ending repentance for what you call your harsh sin: or I, with my sickness and my trouble?—and I have enough of that, Maria." But Maria Lease only shook her head in answer.

"Trouble and repentance are our best lot in this world, Harriet. They come to fit us for heaven."

But North Crabb would not on the whole be shaken out of its belief that the ghost still haunted the empty cottage. And small parties made shivering pilgrimages up there on a moonlight night to watch for it—Mrs. Hill amongst them.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

PENNIE'S CHOICE.

I.

OUR morning studies with Scot were over, and I, Charles Brett, was lying down for my hour's rest before luncheon. Pennie was leaning with folded arms on the back of my sofa; provoking Scot as industriously as she could, while he slowly closed and put away the books she had left in confusion on the table. This room in which we studied was no regular school-room, but the pretty morning room, which Pennie—sole mistress and sole daughter in the house—insisted on my appropriating; and opposite where I lay the wall was mirrored between the two low windows. In this mirror I could see just then a sunny, bright reflection of us all; and the contrast in our three faces struck me then almost as it had never struck me before.

Pennie's came first (one could hardly help noticing Pennie first, in whatever group one saw her), a small, brilliant, piquant face; with merry, mischievous lips, and laughing, dark blue eyes, that seemed to know no shadow and no pain. Yet, though no one else in all the house had seen the gay eyes melt to infinite tenderness, or the arch, curved lips quiver with sympathy, I had many and many a time, as my little only sister knelt beside me in my pain. Below this radiant little face lay my own upon the bright blue cushions; thin and languid, but flushed a little just now—not from my studies, as Pennie said, but from many wide thoughts of which she was the centre. Then, last of all, before my couch stood Scot Cowen, my tutor, yet scarcely older than I, with his pale, grave, thoughtful face, and slight, nervous figure. He was looking across me into Pennie's eyes, and telling her, in the clear earnest voice which I had learned so utterly to love and lean upon, that if she wanted her translation to be corrected, she must re-write it legibly for him.

"I shall have to write it out legibly after you have corrected it," she said. "Surely that is enough labour to bestow on the tamest bit of all the book."

"I cannot read it as it is," began Scot, but corrected himself; "at least, I will not. To-morrow, Miss Brett, you will, I think, have prepared a readable copy for me."

Her eyes flashed upon him as he went quietly on with his work.

"Is Charlie's written carefully?" she asked.

"Yes. He gives me very little trouble that way, as you know."

"I know," she replied, touching my hand softly; "and I give you a good deal, you mean. But let me assure you that you give me

infinitely more, Scot. If it were not that you are oddly gifted with the power of bringing dead and buried facts (chiefly fictions) into the modern sunshine, for my small brain to grasp, I would not come and try to learn from you at all. So stiff you are, and stern, and exacting."

Scot's lips, at that moment, were stern indeed.

"Then don't come in any more, Pennie," said I, laughing a little, though I spoke in anxious earnestness.

"I must, because I must know all you know, Charlie," she answered, stooping impetuously to kiss me—a little act of hers which always thrilled me with pain when she did it in this room, while Scot was with us.

"If you had been anxious for instruction, you would have stayed at school, I should think, Pennie," I laughed.

"Oh, ladies cannot teach," she said, in her pretty and thoroughly laughable little assumption of dictatorship; "no lady ever taught me anything."

Scot laughed quietly. "No one can teach," he said, "unless the pupil will respect their teaching. I cannot teach you for that reason."

"Why, Scot," said Pennie, raising her eyebrows, and pursing up her small, red lips, "I respect you intensely. I always feel a kind of awe overshadowing me when you are near. I should hardly dare to venture into your presence, only I *must* be as clever as Charlie; so I *must* be taught by Charlie's tutor."

"Charlie's tutor is always at your service," returned Scot, gravely; "but while I teach you, you must obey me. *While* I teach you—that is all I ask. When lessons are over, I claim no further authority."

"Of course not," laughed Pennie; "and your claim is small. From Ten to One you require authority unlimited; and I think it is ten to one you will not have it."

"Then I shall decline to give you another lesson at all," rejoined Scot, quite in earnest, though he laughed a little.

"All right, Scot; only you see I have learned (among smatterings of dead languages) to know that you always say that, and always don't abide by it. You should enforce your laws, my tutor."

Looking at Scot, and waiting for his answer, I saw his face change, while his hands were still busy. A patient, far-off look stole into his dark, grave eyes; and I knew, without turning, who had opened the door behind me. Walter Cowen, his half-brother, came up and leaned beside Pennie, looking never once at me, giving me no hand-shake, no thought, until he had feasted his happy eyes on the little winning face which had brightened so wonderfully at his coming. Before I turned, I glanced a moment into the mirror again, and somehow I could not help fancying that the whole picture was changed. Walter's handsome, *débonnaire* face, and lazy, lounging figure had

brought some new element into the scene—a quick, throbbing happiness ; an idle, careless unrest.

Breaking in upon my sudden, silent thought, Scot's few quiet words had an odd effect.

"How is my mother to-day, Walter?"

"Complaining a little, as usual, old fellow ; and, as usual, very unwilling for me to leave her."

"Did she send me a message?"

"Not a bit of it. Her only parting prayer to me was not to ride Satanella."

"And I suppose you mounted her immediately?" I asked, beginning to feel a little tired, and wishing they would go.

"No ; for I was in the saddle when she spoke. You will ride with me this afternoon, won't you, Pennie?"

And Pennie, who loved these rides with Walter more than anything else through all her day, blushed gladly as she nodded her Yes.

"Come now for a stroll in the garden. I came early on purpose for that," said Walter, in the loving tone of appropriation which led Pennie irresistibly.

She whispered Good-bye to me, and they went off together through the low, open window ; their happy voices coming back to us on the scented summer breath. Day after day Scot and I had watched them walking together ; yet, though they filled our hearts, we never spoke of them when we two were left behind.

"I shall leave you now, Charlie, for your rest."

"Where are you going?" I asked, for Scot generally sat with me reading through this hour.

"Not far, dear fellow," he answered, settling my pillows comfortably for me. "I shall be ready to drive you at our usual time."

Left to myself, I tried very hard to think of nothing ; and, of course, thought of many, many things ; trying to put them straight and pleasant for us all, but failing in the effort, as I had failed often and often before. Then I tried to let a quiet trust creep into my heart and still the restless anxiety which was now its constant guest.

Years ago, when Scot was only a boy—head boy in the Easterwood Grammar School, and taking all the prizes, I guessed—no ; hardly guessed, I *knew*—that he loved my sister better than anyone else in the world. True, he had no very near relations of his own to love ; but if he had had, I fancy it would have been just the same. I was a young fourth-form boy in those days, at home on sick leave three quarters of my time ; and Pennie a wayward, mischievous little girl, attempting all my lessons, but never taking the smallest heed of her own ; yet we never fancied Scot at all superior to us, because he was himself so thoroughly unconscious of any superiority. He did not come to our house very much, he worked too hard for that ; but his half-brother,

Walter—a popular boy, who was a proverb of idleness, and did not work his way into the shell until he was leaving—came so perpetually, that he grew to seem a very part of our home life. He was such a pleasant, winning lad, that his very vanity seemed excusable; his very selfishness, amusing; and his love of pleasure, natural and irresistible. Pennie noticed none of these qualities in Walter. She saw him from the first a handsome, daring protector and patron: a boy-lover, who took it for granted that she loved him, and won her heart in doing so. And now that Walter was a tall, handsome fellow of three-and-twenty, and Pennie, with her gleams of childishness, and fitful, authoritative humours, was nearly eighteen, this love was just the love it had been from the first: unharassed by any doubt; undisturbed by any quarrel; untouched by any passion: fresh, and gay, and glad, despite the deep and troubled shadow which it cast upon the lonely path that it for ever crossed.

Walter's widowed mother lived about two miles from us, at Easter Hill, and had a very comfortable property of her own, which, of course, Walter would inherit. Poor Scot, her step-son, had fifty pounds a year of his own; but he had wealth enough in his deep, clear head; and there was as much truth in Mrs. Cowen's indifferent opinion, "Oh, Scot is sure to get on, penniless as he is," as there was in the proud addition, "Dear Walter would never have done to be poor." I do not think Mrs. Cowen disliked Scot at all, she was only utterly indifferent about him, and neglectful of him. Her heart was so entirely filled by Walter, that she really had no room for anyone else; not even for Pennie, though I do believe she tried to love her because Walter loved her.

When Scot left Oxford, where, with his talents and his £50 a year, he had won himself glorious honours, he became my tutor for a time, and lived with us intirely. All my life I shall be glad and grateful for this, for he has taught me as no one else could have done; making my studies pleasant and healthful to me, and rousing me cheerily from the languid, idle life which, in my weakness and inactivity, I might so easily have led. But during all Scot's lessons, I had one sore heartache, and this was through Pennie's determination to have those lessons with me; to learn all I learnt, and for Scot to teach it her. And she would not guess what I knew so well. Would not understand with what a dangerous mixture of pain and pleasure, and joy and anguish, she troubled all his days. Poor Scot! It would have been difficult work to teach her (with her puzzling questions and frequent inattention) if he had not loved her; but, loving her as he did, and knowing what he knew, I did not wonder at the old, still look which was creeping into his young face; my own watching eyes grew dim as I read its unwhispered struggle. And still, in defiance of all my entreaties, Pennie would insist on being taught with me; mastering quickly and brilliantly what my slower nature could not grasp; entering into Scot's opinions, and reading rapidly his only

half-formed thoughts. Turning round and laughing at his pedantry; flashing scornful, provoking words and glances at him; then daintily and proudly, in his very presence, parading the happy, trusting love she gave his brother.

All these things I was thinking over, as I had thought them over many and many a lonely time before, when the luncheon bell rang, and Pennie danced in, that Walter might give me an arm.

"I knew Scot was out, because I saw him plodding up Easter Hill," she said. "What has he gone home for?"

I told her I did not know, and she looked across at Walter, rather puzzled. Then suddenly she laughed.

"I know, Walter. He is afraid your mother may be frightening herself about Satanella, and he is gone to reassure her."

"I hope he may succeed," replied Walter, a little sneeringly.

"I hope he has ridden Satanella himself," I said. "Not walked all that dusty, up-hill road."

"No; he was walking," answered Pennie. "You may depend that was the reason, as I say. It is just the sort of thing poor Scott would be likely to do."

"'Poor Scot,' indeed!" echoed Walter. And I slipped my hand from his arm, and went alone into the dining-room.

Scot did not appear through the meal, but just as Pennie had declared her determination to drive me instead of riding, he came up to us; his face very white, as it always was when he was tired or hot.

"I am glad to see you back to-day, Scot," said Walter, with hearty emphasis, as he ordered Pennie's horse; "for we were nearly missing our ride. Come, Pennie, it will be doubly valuable to us now."

"Charlie," whispered Pennie, an odd wistfulness in her big, bright eyes, "you look as if you didn't want me to go. Shall I drive with you instead?"

I laughed a negative; and yet I did feel strangely unwilling for her to go, guessing that this ride would bring them nearer together than they had ever been before. We watched them off. Then Scot took the reins and we followed them through the open gates; turning the opposite way. We spoke very little to each other—we were real friends enough to be silent together when we would—and I remember feeling oddly relieved when Scot drew the pony up again before the door, and I saw Walter lounging there with his cigar.

"Charlie, Charlie," whispered Pennie, coming in to me as I rested, and putting her arms round my neck and her eyes close to mine: "some day I am going to—marry Walter. Are you glad? My dear, dear brother, are you glad for me, and glad for Walter, and glad for yourself?"

What could I tell her but that I was glad? How could I but be glad for her, with the dancing, love-filled eyes so near to mine? How could

I but be glad for Walter, knowing what her love made my own home? But how—well, there was enough to prevent the words being false when I told her I was glad.

"Really, Charlie?"

I kissed the quivering lips, and told her Walter would be a very happy fellow, and I should miss her sorely. Then tears gathered in her loving eyes, and I think we must both have behaved very childishly for a few minutes, there alone, in the tender evening sunshine.

I begged Walter to leave early that night for fear his mother should be nervous about the young, scarce-broken horse he had brought; but he laughingly declined. He was so happy, and gay, and pleasant, that his refusal did not sound in the least harsh or unkind; and no one thought it so. He and Pennie were so entirely engrossed by each other that—my father being out, and Scot having left the dining-room early and not appeared since—I slipped away to the study. Here Scot was sitting with his book. He looked up and smiled, but I lay down without a word, and he read on. The light faded. Scot closed his book without ringing for lights, and still sat leaning back in his low chair. I heard Satanella's footsteps as she was being led down from the yard, and soon after Pennie opened the door softly and came up to me.

"Are you so tired, Charlie, that you could not stay with us?" she asked, bending over mine a face on which still lingered the parting smile which had been given and received a few minutes before.

"You did not want me, dear," I said, half sadly, half jestingly.

"Indeed, indeed we did," she answered, earnestly, fancying perhaps that her own loving feelings must be shared by Walter too. "We always shall. Am I not your own and only sister, Charlie? and is not Walter going to be your only brother?"

Even in the dying light I could see Scot raise a sharp, questioning face; and, reading its agony, I involuntarily laid my hand on Pennie's lips. Then I laughed nervously at her astonishment.

"Scot is waiting to hear your secret from your own lips," I said, wishing with all my heart that I had told him myself while we sat alone there in the twilight.

"Oh, Scot," she began, with shy hesitation, "I didn't see you; else I would have told you. At least I think so, if—if Walter hasn't."

"You have kept Walter so entirely to yourself, little lady," I put in, hurriedly, "that he cannot have told anyone."

"He—and I," said Pennie, in slow, happy tones, but with timid, shrinking eyes as she looked at him, "are—engaged, Scot."

"Yes," said Scot, quietly.

She paused a minute, waiting for him to say more, then tossed back her bright little head, and looked down comically at me.

"Ought not Scot to say he is glad, or something of that kind, Charlie? Isn't it considered right?"

I saw that she was speaking at random, and that her cheeks had flushed and her eyes filled with tears as she read what was so sadly familiar to me in the grave, kind face.

"I think you need no congratulations, dear," I said, vaguely; "you have enough in your own heart."

Her little fingers closed tightly on mine, yet she had recourse to her old petulant defiance immediately.

"Scot is hard and stern and cold to me, as usual," she stammered, hotly. "Just because I made a few mistakes in a paltry translation."

Scot was standing against the table close to us then; his slight figure leaning a little: his face white and proud.

"If I can be hard and stern and cold to you, then let me be so, child, in pity; for under it all my heart burns with a wild, strong love which I cannot always govern. Let me bury it if I can, whatever comes to take its place."

There was a long, motionless pause among us; then, with a startled movement, as if something were suddenly made clear to her, Pennie left my side and stood close to Scot. She laid her two little hands on his, and spoke with glistening eyes.

"Some day, Scot, when you have taught Charlie and me all that we shall be able to learn (it isn't much, you know), you will go out into the great world and find a happiness like mine; only deeper, because your heart is deeper; and when you tell me of it—as you will do, because we shall be always friends—I shall say, what you are saying to me now with your kind eyes, 'God bless you in your happiness!'"

Scot took the little earnest hands and held them closely for a minute; but if he spoke at all I did not hear what he said. Then he went away, and Pennie sat down beside me, very still and silent; while the pitying darkness crept in and hid her face.

(Concluded next month.)



ONE LESS IN A COTTAGE HOME.

HE was a little, gentle boy, fair and beautiful to stranger eyes as well as to the partial ones of those who loved him. If he had lived four days longer, it would have been his birthday : and you iron and fold away the little garments—the last thing you can ever do for Charley.

There is his little white broad-brimmed sun-hat—not smooth and fresh from the iron, but just as it was taken off the last time he ever wore it. Your heart *aches* when you look at it, remembering the little, tired face that looked out from it that day when his mother had taken him out herself, and set him down on the floor when she came home, with some impatient words about how cross he had been. And he was never well any more.

Here are his little dresses—a pile of them. Here is the one that you always thought so pretty ; and there the one he had on when he died. The white one, tucked and puffed and trimmed with so much care, into which you, though you were not his mother, wrought so many loving, prideful thoughts for him—they buried him in that. On the shelf are his little shoes and stockings ; yonder in the trunk is the dainty new white hat that made him look like an infant prince. But the little feet are shut away out of sight now, and the dear head, with its rings of soft brown hair, is lying very low.

How still the house is ! No baby there, struggling down out of his mother's or nurse's arms to the ground, creeping to his grandmother's chair, off again to Aunt Mary's : holding on with clinging hands to your clothes, climbing up laboriously to uncertain footing by your side, *earning* his right to be taken up for a brief few minutes of pleased delight. Little Charley, little Charley !

The house is orderly enough now. No tumbled cushions and littered chairs and floors. You used to be impatient sometimes, and wonder why *every* thing in the house need be got down to please one child. But that is all gone by. The workbox stands undisturbed on the bureau. Clothes-pegs and keys, bright tin cups and pans, are all in their places. The eyes that took such delight in the queer play-things are closed now ; the busy hands are still.

He loved his grandmother. *She* was never impatient with him—never too busy or tired to take him up and rock him till he went to sleep, with his head on her shoulder or tucked under her arm in an odd little way of his own. How *well* you remember all the pretty ways ! and grandmother cannot bear now to sit down in the great rocking-chair for thinking of the little creeping figure that used to come hurry-

ing to her feet. She has other grand-children, good and pretty enough, and dear to her heart; but none that will ever seem to her just like the babe who was born in her house and lived all his short life there.

Here are the steps he would try to climb up; there's the door where he used to stand, holding himself up by a board put across to keep him in, and looking out with rapt interest at the wonders of trees, and sky, and moving things. The child was most pleased of all when the brown house-dog came to the door; or into the house, when permitted, for a quiet play with his little play-fellow. He was not a handsome dog; not always a gentle one; for he would bite a man without any compunction of conscience if he got the chance: but the big brown eyes looked with almost *human* kindness upon the child; whose little hands went fearlessly into the great mouth, and among the strong, sharp, white teeth, with a baby's unerring confidence in canine good will. Well the gentle child knew, that nothing, brute or human, could find it in their heart to hurt *him*.

How eager the loving face would grow when some one called "Franky" and "Minie"—little cousins. He thought there was nothing in the world as pretty as Frank's blue eyes, his yellow curls, and apple-red cheeks. The path is there, running between the rows of apple-trees to the gate; and the little girl's feet come pattering along it on almost daily visits to "grandma;" but no earnest face and wistful eyes watch now for their coming.

The grief of childhood is transient, and there is a new sister to absorb the interest of those little cousins. And you wonder, sometimes, whether even mother love will remember always. Oh! *does* a mother ever forget the dead lamb of her flock? Mothers of large families,—happy mothers of many children; as the years come and go, bringing new claimants for their love, for their homely joys and daily duties, do they still keep *one* thought for the little ones that need no longer any watchful care? Will *she* keep one for Charley?

The father, comes and goes, alert, busy, occupied with his business and his land, but not just the man he was six months ago. Something has gone out of his life that will never come into it again. Hardly more than a boy himself yet: a wayward, self-willed boy, secretly rueing the mad folly that hurried him into the most ill-assorted union under the sun; and chafing desperately at his bonds, now that there is no innocent, loving child to make the thralldom endurable.

He picked his wife up for her pretty face, and married her in his indulged wilfulness, and brought her home to his father's house. *They* received her: they tried to make the best of what could not be undone: but he soon saw the terrible mistake he had made, as her light nature and selfish disposition peeped out bit by bit in their true colours. Little happiness had the young couple one with another.

There were those who used to say that he never cared for his child. But ah ! *you* knew better than that—you who had loved him all his life, and knew his ways and his heart as no stranger could. He never was one to show what he felt : but that little child of his was all the world to him, his only solace in life. And when the time of trial came—those dreadful two weeks of pain that no skill could alleviate, no love help, and the doctors shook their heads as they thought Charley could not be saved—it was *his* hand, gentle as a woman's with all its strength, that administered the medicines ; *his* feet, that never tired by night or day ; *his* eyes, sleepless with anxiety, that watched every shadow of change in the suffering little face. Charley would look up in his patience to the beloved countenance, and try to lisp Pa-pa, pa-pa. Even she would weep to see it.

And in the last hour, when tear-wet faces pressed closer and closer about the bed, when every voice was hushed to silence, listening to the struggling breath that it was such torture to hear, and grandma held the baby hands in hers, helping him to die ; it was pitiful *then* to see the strong man's still control give way suddenly. The set face broke up into tears, the voice into sobs. It is dreadful to see a man weep.

More silence ; more prayers ; more tears. And by and by there is a little pallid image upon the bed, but it is not Charley. Just the earthly garment that a baby's soul has worn ; the pure white soul that has gone up to its Maker, leaving its clay tenement behind, fair and still, and very, very precious, but *not* your living, loving Charley ! Only the silken curls on the dear head—they are not changed ; and you clip one and lay it tenderly away for remembrance, while some words linger in the mind like a voice from another land :—

“ Sunny brows—no care shall shade them ;
Bright eyes—tears shall never dim ;
Rosy lips—no time shall fade them ;
Jesus called them unto Him.”

Well, all that passed. And now, in these late autumn days, there is something in the churchyard corner that the sweet baby eyes never saw there—a fresh grave. He came home in the spring just before he left us with some violets plucked from the very place in his little hand. It is grandpapa's. For he, the ailing old man, has followed Charley on that long journey. Infancy and age : there's many such graves side by side. We seem to hear his voice yet in the stillness of the twilight, ay, even among the sounds and noises of the day, calling “ Charley, boy ! ” as he was wont to do when both were with us. He was so fond and proud of this little grandson, and his grief for him was great.

But it is pleasant to think that after the weariness and pain of his final sickness, after the passage through the valley of the Shadow of Death, it was Charley who would greet him on the other side.

M. J. A.

ST. SYLVESTER'S EVE.

THE Countess von Adlerstein sat alone in her boudoir, an anxious wrinkle on her forehead and an uneasy look in her eyes, as she turned now and again to the window, gazing out into the rapidly deepening twilight. The last day of the old year was drawing to a close, and all the church bells in Munich were ringing its requiem. But the Countess never heeded their clang ; never heeded the hubbub of noise which rose from the brilliantly lighted Christmas fair in the Maximilian Platz. She was listening intently to the tinkle of every passing sleigh, in the hope of hearing it turn into the courtyard.

At last her expectations were fulfilled, and she summoned the page who waited in the antechamber.

"Has Count Albert arrived?"

"This moment, your excellency."

"Tell him, I wish to speak to him at once."

In a few minutes a quick light step was heard outside the door and a tall fair young man in Bavarian uniform entered. Going to his mother's side, he kissed her hand respectfully.

"Your excellency sent for me," he said ; and there was something inexpressibly winning in the frank, joyous tones of his voice.

"Yes Albert—sit down here, beside me, for I have to speak to you seriously."

The young man gave an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders, but obeyed quietly.

"Albert, you have not now to learn that your father is very much discontented with your conduct of late ; you are never at home, and from every quarter we hear fresh accounts of your escapades. He is determined, once for all, that there shall be an end of this."

Albert knew very well that on occasions such as the present, his father's name was used but as a cloak for the countess's own sentiments. Count Adlerstein was a timid, feeble old man, from whose hands the reins of government had long ago been taken by his despotic wife. She ruled him with a rod of iron, and would fain have exercised the same sway over her sons : but the elder, Count Louis, had escaped from domestic tyranny by entering the Austrian army, and Albert was not always as manageable as his mother would have liked.

Louis had just returned on leave of absence from Vienna, to find many things changed at home. Albert, whom he had left a wild, heedless, merry-hearted boy—always in amusing scrapes, but never getting

into serious mischief—Albert was most changed of all. Wild, reckless as ever he still was, but all his light-hearted gaiety was gone, and Louis was astonished and grieved to see the alternate bursts of mad spirits and fits of gloomy despondency which characterized his manner. For nearly a year, Albert had been betrothed to a very lovely girl, one of the belles of the Bavarian Court—Chrysta von Lindenburg, the beautiful heiress of one of the wealthiest and noblest families in Munich. The time fixed for the marriage was now drawing nigh, but Albert's wild extravagance had been of late so much the topic of conversation that people began to shake their heads and wonder that the Graf von Lindenburg did not interfere. Louis had but a week ago been introduced to his brother's intended bride. His first emotion was that of strong admiration of her great beauty, and wonder that Albert could be unhappy while possessing the love of so glorious a being; but so he evidently was.

Albert now listened quietly to his mother's tirade, and answered with provoking indifference.

"I was not aware that I had been doing anything worse than usual to excite your displeasure, my gracious mother."

"Worse than usual! No! Unfortunately you are getting accustomed to this course of dissipation; but its consequences are now becoming more serious on account of your approaching marriage."

Albert's brows contracted, and he gave a slight shudder as his mother spoke. She continued without noticing him.

"Graf von Lindenburg has been with your father this morning. He declares that in spite of the scandal of breaking off a public betrothal, he will insist on Chrysta's giving it up if you do not alter your conduct."

Albert looked up suddenly, and an irrepressible gleam of joy illuminated his fair, delicate features.

"I believe that Chrysta would be glad herself if it were broken off, my mother. She has never really cared for me."

"This is folly, Albert! She does, or did care for you until you did your best to disgust her by your systematic neglect. You have twice put off your marriage on one pretext or another; and now that it is finally fixed for next month, and that custom exacts your being constantly seen in public with your fiancée, you never go near her, and spend your time Heaven knows where. We only hear of you through some act of folly by which you have made yourself the town-talk. What is this wager of which Count Lindenburg speaks?"

"Oh! that! So he has heard of it!" said Albert, laughing carelessly. "Your excellency need not scold about the wager. It is a very harmless one."

"But for an enormously heavy sum; and one that will half ruin you if you lose it."

"I shall not lose it. The wager was originally with Colonel Detten-

hausen ; but the whole regiment has taken it up, determined to punish my vanity. The terms were, that I should go to the court masquerade to-night, and there attract more attention than any other costume in the room ; nay, even that their Majesties shall take special notice of me. Now, most of our officers will be there, and I know that they and many others have formed a league against me. They intend to make me lose by not taking the smallest heed of my presence, no matter how striking my costume, or how charming my handsome self may be. No matter : I shall win all the same."

"How so?"

"By going as one of the town sweeps, with a ladder and soot bag on my back—real soot, mind you. Do you think they will not clear the way before me as for a royal progress? Even Dettenhausen himself would sooner lose his wager than come in contact with me."

The countess could not help laughing, in spite of her vexation.

"It will not do, Albert," she said. "It would be a disrespect to their Majesties to come before them in such a costume. I do not believe you would even be admitted."

"Don't fear that, my mother. No one loves a laugh better than the Queen ; and I would make a second wager with you that she will bestow particular praise on my costume. Then, as for the door-keeper, Prince A—— himself is in my confidence, and has promised to arrange it all."

"But, Albert, the Sylvester's waltz. You cannot dance if you go in such a costume ; and Chrysta, you know, can dance it with no one but you. She will take it as a studied slight if you avoid it."

"Not at all, mother ; Louis can take my place. It would be perfectly proper for Chrysta to dance it with him. She has at least sense enough to see that I cannot lose my wager for the sake of such a punctilio. Louis will explain it to her. I delegate all my privileges to him for the time," he concluded, with a bitter laugh.

"No, Albert. I insist upon it that you do no such thing. The Lindenburgs will be irrevocably offended. What is the loss of this miserable wager to the loss of Chrysta's fortune? You shall not do it."

"Pardon, my gracious mother. I am sorry to displease you, but I am bound to fulfil my promise. I daresay Chrysta will console herself as easily as I shall for the change of partners. Your excellency will excuse my retiring ; it is time to dress for the masquerade, where I hope to enchant you by my imposing appearance."

"I shall not see you at least. I shall send an excuse to her Majesty, for I will not go there to see you disgrace the family of Adlerstein by making a buffoon of yourself, and outraging your betrothed."

"I am sorry for it," returned the young man lightly. "Your excellency will in that case lose a good laugh. Which is, after all, the only thing worth living for."

He left the room as he spoke, and ran up-stairs with a mocking

glitter in his eye. But on the upper landing he stopped. His face changed to an expression of sad, passionate longing, as he strode resolutely backwards and forwards once or twice.

"She will be angry. No matter. I must see her," he muttered, tapping at one of the doors.

A gentle voice answered, "Come in."

As he entered and shut the door behind him, a pale and sorrowful, but most lovely girl rose from her seat.

"Albert, you here!" she exclaimed in a tone of quiet reproach.

"Yes, Hermina. You will allow me no other opportunity of speaking to you. I am obliged to seek you here, in spite of your prohibition."

"Oh! Albert, you know this is wrong. You promised me not to try to see me alone again. What good can it possibly do? None, unless it be to make us both more miserable. I feel that it is treachery to my aunt, who has been kind to me in her own fashion."

"Hermina, my mother has no right to sacrifice us both to her ambition and covetousness."

Hermina's large brown eyes filled with tears as she replied firmly: "You must not speak thus of your mother, Albert. Hear me now, once for all. When your parents proposed this marriage a year ago, you had not courage to risk their anger by confessing your love for me. You allowed yourself to be drawn into the betrothal. I forgave you then. I believed it best for the family peace that we should resign our hopes. Since that day I have tried to regard you only as the betrothed husband of Chrysta von Lindenburg. You know best whether you have endeavoured to render my heavy burden easier to bear; whether you have since acted honourably either to me or to Chrysta."

"Mina, Mina, you are very hard. Oh! my darling, how can I see you daily and keep up the rôle of quiet cousinly friendship you have chosen to assign me? It is too much that I should pay for a moment's weakness by the wretchedness of my whole life. And yours, too, Mina. I know well that you love me still. We cannot, we must not, separate; I will do anything; I will——"

"You will keep your engagement to Chrysta, Albert, and you must never see me again. This very night I will ask my aunt to allow me to go at once to Countess Nilsdorf. I will not be the cause of breaking your own honour—and Chrysta's heart."

"Chrysta's heart will not be broken, Mina. She cares little or nothing about me, and—Hermina, if Chrysta herself breaks her engagement to me, would you still be so unrelenting?"

"Oh, Albert! Chrysta would never dare to break a formal betrothal, even if she wished it—which I cannot believe. Oh, no! There is no hope. And now, Albert, this must end: you must leave me."

Albert snatched the young girl to his heart, in spite of her resistance, and kissed her passionately.

"Mina," he cried, "I will not give you up—I *will not*, I tell you. I may be wild, heedless, weak in other ways; but my love for you is as strong as death, and I will not be false to it. All hope is not yet over. I may still get out of this engagement with honour; but this I swear, that whether you are my wife or not, I will never marry Chrysta von Lindenburg, or any other woman. Bad as I may be, I am not wicked enough to swear to love one woman while my whole heart and soul are given to another."

With that he released her, and went out; while Hermina threw herself on a sofa, in a passion of tears.

The gorgeous state apartments of the new palace were flooded with light and glittering with gilding, frescoes, and the brilliant costumes of a throng of maskers.

The King and Queen had just entered the white throne-room with the young Crown Prince and his little brother. Good King Max stood on the dais, his hand on the shoulder of his son; a slender stripling with large visionary eyes, and an absent, dreamy air—one on whose shoulders the mantle of royalty would soon fall as a heavy burden. The courtiers came up one by one to pay their respects, and were received with the kindly dignity which made King Maximilian of Bavaria, and his sweet and amiable consort, so universally and deservedly beloved.

The Queen gave the signal to begin, and instantly the brilliant and motley throng were waltzing to the strains of the Jägers band. The golden armour of the knightly statues, which are arranged down each side of the throne-room, flashed and glittered as if the wearers were endowed with life and might at any moment descend from their pedestals and mingle with the dancers. Greeks, Arabs, characters of history and romance, priests, and devils, whirled round with nuns, sultanas, bouquetières, fairies, priestesses of the sun, and peasant girls.

The waltz is ended, and the strangely-assorted couples are promenading through the splendid rooms.

"I wonder Albert does not make his appearance," said a noble looking young man, attired as Max Piccolomini, to his companion; a stately and beautiful druidess, with long golden hair flowing from under her oak wreaths, and falling in a wavy mantle over her white dress.

"Oh! I daresay he will come soon," she returned indifferently. "Did you not hear of his having made some wager that he would appear in a wonderful costume? Most likely he is waiting till the whole company shall have assembled, that he may have the more admirers."

"I do not think you will admire him particularly to-night, Countess Chrysta. In fact, he is so doubtful of your approval of his costume that he thinks you will refuse to dance the Sylvester's waltz with him; and has deputed me to that honour, if you have no objection."

"The Sylvester's waltz! But you know I ought only to dance it with my fiancée, on account of——" Chrysta hesitated with a deep blush, and then hurriedly continued. "Why should I refuse to dance it with Albert, Count Louis?"

Louis was saved the trouble of answering, for at that moment a commotion took place in the ball-room seldom witnessed within the decorous limits of the Court. Little screams from the ladies and bursts of laughter from the gentlemen announced that something unusual was taking place.

Chrysta and Louis pressed forward to see what the noise was about, but retreated as hurriedly from the approach of a most diabolical-looking figure clothed in a ragged tight suit and battered hat, which, as well as his face, were black as a gnome. A short ladder and soot-bag were fastened over his shoulder, and as the other masques hastily cleared the way before him, he paraded the rooms, every now and then giving vent to the well-known nasal cry of the Munich sweeps. He marched right up to Colonel Dettenhausen, politely presenting his brush, black and sooty, for that gentleman's inspection; but the bold warrior gave way and fled with precipitation, while a shout of laughter from his brother officers celebrated his discomfiture. The sweep instantly turned the tables on them by charging amongst them with his invincible weapons, from which they all ignominiously retreated for fear of having their gorgeous costumes destroyed. Undoubtedly Albert had won his wager, for no other masque in the room had attracted half so much attention. Even the royal party were roused to some curiosity by the stir, and hearing an account of the matter from Prince A——, the King himself sent one of his equeries to summon the audacious sweep to the presence. His ludicrous appearance was greeted by a hearty laugh from their Majesties, echoed in more smothered tones by their suite. The only one who did not seem infected by the general hilarity was the Hof Marshal Graf von Lindenburg, who scowled most portentously on recognizing his intended son-in-law.

The Queen laughingly complimented Count Albert von Adlerstein on his excellent taste in costume, and suggested that he should receive an appointment on the spot as Master of the Robes to his Majesty. Graf von Lindenburg muttered in his beard, so low as to be heard only by Albert, who happened to be standing next him: "Court Fool would be more appropriate."

After a round of ironical compliments, and as near an approach to jokes as may be allowed in a royal presence, Albert was dismissed, and made another pilgrimage through the ante-rooms, scattering the crowd right and left before him. He left the palace without speaking a word to his fiancée, who stood leaning on the arm of Count Louis, regarding him with half scornful amusement.

Was it pique that made the Countess Chrysta accord such gracious

attention to the efforts of Louis von Adlerstein for her entertainment during the remainder of the evening? It was very natural she should dance a good deal with one soon to be so closely connected with her, but she seemed to have so entirely forgotten her truant lover, and to be so engrossed by the conversation of Louis, as to give rise to various remarks among the bystanders.

"One would say that Fraülein von Lindenburg consoles herself very well for the negligence of her intended," said the Baroness Walldingen to Colonel Dettenhausen.

"Pity she does not throw him over altogether," growled the latter, who was very sour at the loss of his wager. "Albert von Adlerstein will never be anything but a weathercock. Very different from that fine manly brother of his. Does not your Grace think that Countess von Lindenburg and he would have made a splendid pair?"

"True," said the lady, meditatively. "But Chrysta would never dare to change now. They are publicly betrothed."

The evening drew to an end, and it was the last hour of the old year. A little before twelve o'clock the first notes of the "Faust" music sounded forth, and the cavaliers claimed their partners for that most coveted dance, "The Sylvester's Waltz," which gives the privilege of a salute as the first stroke of the clock announces the advent of the new year.

"Chrysta, you will dance with me, will you not?" said Louis, eagerly. "I have Albert's permission."

"If Albert does not care to dance with me himself, he has certainly no right to dispose of my hand," returned Chrysta, proudly. "However," she continued, in a softer tone, "I suppose the conventionalities will permit me to dance with you. So come, let us join the waltzers."

Louis passed his arm round her waist, and in a moment they were in the charmed circle. Wilder, faster, rose the music; and swiftly, giddily they whirled round together, Louis gazing down into his lovely partner's eyes, and drinking in a dangerous, intoxicating delight, that he did not stop to analyse. Chrysta faltered and blushed under that gaze as she had never done before the gaze of her betrothed. She felt strangely happy, and could have wished to float on for ever in that sweet dream. The clock struck the first stroke of midnight. The music ceased, and the whole air was full of the new year's chimes from the Hof Kapelle. Louis looked longingly into Chrysta's eyes for permission to take the caress which custom authorized. She did not refuse, and their lips met in a long, clinging kiss. Chrysta tore herself from him, trembling violently. Amid the noisy congratulations going on around, the two stood side by side, not daring to look at each other or to resume the waltz. Both had learned too much of themselves in the last minute, and Chrysta felt overwhelmed with shame, Louis with self-reproach, at the discovery.

"H—m—m!" said Colonel Dettenhausen to himself. "We shall

see how all that will turn out. I would not give much for Master Albert's chance of the beauty and her fortune."

The Sylvester's ball was over. King Frost and his myrmidons held icy reign in the deserted streets, which had ceased to echo the jingle of the sleigh bells. The dawn of the new year was breaking in the sky, but Count Louis had not retired to rest. He was pacing restlessly up and down his room, waging a great struggle with his own heart. For twenty-three years that heart had slumbered, and was only now awakened to life. He knew that he was passionately in love, and—oh, shame and misery!—with his brother's betrothed. And Chrysta? A thrill of joy, mingled with something like terror, ran through him as he recollected her emotion. The vivid blush and trembling that had seized her after that fatal kiss. Could it be that she too—? Oh, no; anything rather than that! He, Louis von Adlerstein, the proud, honourable gentleman, to betray the brother who trusted him! And to steal from him the affections of his promised wife! Never. He would leave Munich the next day, and not see Chrysta again until the marriage vows should have made her Albert's irrevocably; until he should have learned to regard her as a sister. Count Louis' lips took a stern and determined set as he came to this resolution, and he threw himself on his bed to toss and turn feverishly till morning.

At the same hour Chrysta buried her face in her pillow, bathed in bitter tears. She, too, had for the first time learnt what love meant, and turned with loathing from a future filled with vain regrets for the *might have been*.

The Countess von Adlerstein was in a very bad humour. Contradictions were meeting her on all sides to-day, and it was not in the nature of that despotic lady to bear contradictions equably.

This morning her niece, Hermina, had announced her intention of leaving her, against her express desire that she should stay until after Albert's wedding; and now her eldest son had declared that he also must return to Vienna on sudden business. When urged to come back at least in time for his brother's marriage, he had answered that it might not be possible.

The most he would promise was to remonstrate with Mina, who had always regarded him with a strong sisterly affection, and to prevail upon her to renounce her project of departure.

Accordingly he went to Hermina's sanctum, where a more difficult task awaited him than he had anticipated.

"May I come in, Hermina?" he cried, as he knocked at the door, at the same time entering without waiting for permission.

Poor Hermina had been packing up her treasures and valuables—small love-tokens given to her by Albert, which were still all too dear to her; and she had shed many bitter tears as she realized how truly for her all life's sunshine had departed.

"My dear little cousin, what is the matter?" asked Louis kindly, as he saw that Hermina was trying to conceal the fact that she had been weeping. She could not at once answer, and he affectionately drew her to a seat beside him.

"Mina, dear, you know we have long been as brother and sister together. Will you not tell me what grieves you, and why you have so suddenly resolved to leave our house? Just at this moment, too, when my mother has most need of you."

"Do not ask me, Louis; I cannot tell you," she sobbed, hiding her face from him.

"No—she will never tell you, but I will," cried Albert, who had entered the room unperceived. Hermina sprang to her feet with a cry, and tried to silence him; but he went on in spite of her.

"Louis, you are the only person that I can trust, and perhaps you may be able to help us. The reason Mina wishes to leave us is because she and I love each other, and she dreads the outbreak that must come sooner or later. I cannot, and will not, fulfil my engagement to Chrysta. It would be worse treachery than to break it."

"Albert, what are you saying?" exclaimed his brother wildly. "You do not love Chrysta?"

"Love her! I almost hate her. My cowardice and weakness made me consent to this accursed betrothal, but it is impossible to carry it out. Chrysta does not care for me; and I love, and have loved all my life, none but Mina."

A happy light shone in Count Louis' eyes, and he grasped his brother's hand. "Albert—I believe—I hope I can extricate you from this dilemma. What would you say if Chrysta were to prove as faithless as yourself?"

"Say! I should bless her fickleness. I should not, indeed, call it so, for she never loved me."

"So much the better. I have the more chance of supplanting you."

"You, Louis! Are you serious?"

"Perfectly so. I daresay my mother will not care much which of her sons marries Chrysta, so long as she becomes her daughter-in-law. It only remains to be seen whether we can get the young lady's consent to the change."

That doubt did not very long subsist.

A month after that blessed Eve of St. Sylvester, a double wedding took place in the Hof Kapelle, the contracting parties being Count Louis von Adlerstein, with the heiress of the ancient family of Linden-burg; and his brother Albert, with Hermina von Waldorf.

IN THE LAST GREAT NEED.

A GLOOM, almost as of some sad terror, lay over the village. But a few short weeks ago none had been more blithesome in all the Vaterland. A hot, unclouded, radiant summer, under which the products of the earth had flourished, and nature smiled. The cattle reposed in the green plains; the corn was ripening; the picturesque vineyards were heavy with their growing fruit. Winding round and about, like a sea of glistening glass, might be caught distant glimpses of the far-famed river; that beautiful Rhine, so dear to those whose homes are near it. On this peaceful village not a cloud had rested; no foreshadowing had arisen of the blow that was, even then, hovering in the air. Fathers of families with their grown-up sons went home from their daily avocations in the evening, singing low snatches of pleasant songs. The frugal evening meal over, they sat, mothers and daughters with them, outside their doors, watching the golden clouds left by the sun-set; neighbours gossiping calmly, one group with another, children sporting around. There existed no care as to whence the winter bread should come; there was truly no cause to "take thought for the morrow."

Only a few weeks ago! And look at it now.

The green plains lay stretched around still, but there was none to care for, or till them: the corn had been rudely torn up, some lay unreaped and trodden down; the cattle were driven away; the promising vineyards had been devastated. And who should restore order and put these evils straight again? Who—who? For the flower of the male inhabitants had gone forth to battle, at the call of the Prussian King.

It was only desolation now. The wives and daughters remained; but the men, husbands and sons, those gay-hearted men, who had come singing home from their labour, without a care, save to win the daily bread, were gone. A vast many of them would never be seen or heard again in this world. Had the church bell tolled for all those who fell on the battle-field, its sound had never ceased, night or day.

Never, since the world began, had a war been waged—as it seemed to these terror-stricken women—like unto this war. The carnage was awful. Fresh drafts of men, one lot after another, were called out, only to go forth and die. Whether the French or the Germans fell the fastest, few could know—save the Recording Angel of Death, who numbers each one unerringly. There were moments when the unhappy women held their hands aloft with a bitter cry—asking whether Heaven had no care for their sorrow.

Another golden sunset: just as lovely as those sunsets had been in

the time of peace. It was but September ; and yet it seemed as if an age had gone on since the war-whoop sounded in July. So at least, thought Madame Werter. *She* had been amidst those contented, happy mothers, who had welcomed the sons home from their daily toil. Three fine, stalwart sons, as tall as their late father, who had died the year before.

Madame Werter was one of the well-to-do in the village : a small proprietor. Manners, habits, and notions are simple over there ; but with us in England she would almost have taken rank as a gentlewoman. She was Swiss by birth ; the daughter of a minister of the culte Evangelique. Monsieur Constant, a descendant of the strictest of the Huguenots, had reared his daughter to piety ; and when Charlotte Constant had married Ludwig Werter the German, she carried her principles with her to her husband's land. He was of the Protestant faith, too : which hardly needs to be said. Hulda, the daughter, and the three little sons were taught to say their prayers with their earliest years, and to read the New Testament.

Hulda was married ; and had gone away to live in Heidelberg. Carl, the eldest son, saw to the land in the place of his dead father ; Ludwig, the second, was in a bureau of commerce ; Christian, the youngest, had a place in the public school. When the first trumpet-note of war sounded, the two younger had gone forth at its call in pursuance of their duty. Christian had died in his first battle : two days ago news had come in of the death of Ludwig. They had fallen for their country. Carl was called on now. He, and the rest of the reserve—young men who under ordinary circumstances would not have been called out at all—were even now making their preparations for departure. It was pitiable. But with all that wholesale slaughter going on, engagement following close upon engagement, each one leaving its thousands of dead and wounded on the field, the ranks must be replenished, don't you see ? What else would you ?

Charlotte Werter, sitting in the shade that fell after the evening's brilliant sunset—for it sometimes happens that the brighter the sunset, the more quickly the shade succeeds it ; as is often the case in the events of life—was in the very depth of misery. Christian's death and Ludwig's death had been of those blows that a mother shrinks from : and now Carl was going and might equally fall. She was not yet fifty years of age ; comely, but a little bent in figure, for in frame she had never been strong. The last ray of light from the west shone on her silver hair, which had changed to grey early ; and on the wedding-ring that hung loosely on her hard, thin fingers. Oh, but it was hard to bear ! First Christian ; then Ludwig. And now Carl—dearer perhaps to the mother's heart than either, for he was her first-born son—Carl must go ! In the very attitude of the clasped hands, pressed upon her bosom as if to still its anguish, there might be read trouble akin to despair.

Thoughts, than which nothing can be graver on this side Heaven, had laid hold of her mind in that still evening hour. They had occurred to her occasionally from the very first time that the young men began to fall : but never as visibly as now. We, who are careless upon such subjects—as too many of us are—will lightly say, Oh it came of her strict Huguenot training. Very true. But it might be better if such thoughts came oftener to us. It was not so much the loss, to her and to the world, of the two sons already dead, or the possible loss of the last one, now going forth ; it was not the doubt as to who would till her land in future and win bread for her to eat : not this, was it, that troubled Madame Werter : but the death in itself.

How did these young men, cut off in their youth, stand with Heaven ? On what Reckoning had they entered, in the next world ?

Those who had fallen, of this neighbourhood alone, might be counted by scores. Some had been trained to remember the Eternity that must set-in after death, and been shown how to live in preparation for it ; others had not. There might not, in practical conduct, have been much difference between the two sorts when the call to war came. For, young men, taken as a whole, will be young men ; in the heyday of warm-blooded youth they forget childhood's precepts. It will be time enough to draw in and be sober when we grow a bit older, think they—if by chance they think at all. But, the "older" time was not to come. In the midst of their headlong career—certainly one of indifference, perhaps of sin—away they went, rushing, at the war-call ; and the next thing known was that their life was over. The thousands and thousands and thousands who had met this death, seemed to pass in review before Madame Werter. Standing in the ranks one minute in front of the enemy, thinking of nothing perhaps but glory, the next some bullet had found its mark, and struck them down. Their bodies lay on the battle-field, soon to grow cold ; their souls were before their Maker. They had not sought death, these poor young men ; they had not died even in the course of nature ; they had not, of their own free will, gone forth to fight ; not one but would have shunned it an' he might. Would the awful consequences of unrepentance be visited on them ? Charlotte Werter stroked back her silver hair, damp with emotion, and moaned faintly in her bitter anguish.

Her sons ? Well—trained to religion in their early years though they had been, they were not much, if any, better than the rest. One certainty loomed out, all clearly—they could not have been fit to die. In the hurry and bustle of departure, they had gone forth with their comrades, and she, their mother, had but time to say God be with you. Ludwig and Christian, and all the hosts of the fallen—French and Germans, too, for the matter of that—on what condition had they entered ? What would be the condition of those yet to fall ?

Where was Carl ? Out somewhere with his companions. A thought

came over her that if his heart were in the right place, he would have spent this last night with her, his mother. Before break of dawn, they must be at the station. He might—yes, he might have gone to his aunt's, to say farewell to the girl-cousins. Madame Werter put a woollen kerchief over her cap, and went out.

Carl was not with the cousins : he had not got so far. As Madame Werter passed the window of the Frau von Steinmetz, she saw Carl in there with Lisa and the two sons, and others ; a merry party seemingly, drinking beer and laughing. She had warned Carl against being so intimate at the Frau's dwelling—for she did not like them, especially Lisa, who was bold. The two Steinmetz lads did not go to the war : one was lame, the other somewhat deformed. Madame Werter used to pity the Frau for this calamity—she envied her now. Home, she turned again, a deep sigh escaping her.

How pitiable the place looked ! There was some bustle to-night, consequent upon the fresh departure of the reserve, otherwise it was like a village of the dead. The benches outside the doors had no occupiers ; the windows were dark and sad. There was no singing now, no kindly gossip, no merry meetings. Hardly a dwelling but had lost a father or a son. Three or four stood at old Widow Hartmann's door.

"What is to-do?" asked Madame Werter, as she passed.

"News has just come of the death of her son Franz. He was shot some days ago."

And Franz Hartmann had been the greatest ill-doer of the place. No better than a reprobate. Madame Werter went home in worse distress than she had come out. Oh the sad deaths of these poor young fellows—cut off in their recklessness !—but boys, most of them. And they had not sought it of themselves, but been driven to it ! It was like a flock of helpless animals who are led to the slaughter. But for this, they might have lived to be old, and died in peace with God.

It was close upon ten when Carl came in : a nice-countenanced, fresh-faced young man, he, with bright blue eyes. He freely told his mother where he had been—saying adieu round about, to the Frau von Steinmetz amidst the rest. He spoke with a careless gaiety ; but his mother saw it was put on. Put on, that the parting to her might be less hard.

She sat with the Bible before her. And in this, the most solemn moment of her whole life, she strove to say a word that might stand him in good need when the world was failing. The way became well paved for her ; for Carl suddenly burst into tears. Fine young German though he was, nearly six feet high and strong as a lion, the tender nature within him prevailed to-night, and he cried like a child. His two brothers were gone ; three parts of his boyhood's companions were gone ; he was going forth to tempt the same fate, and might fall as they

had. In spite of his careless ways, Carl had greatly loved his mother; and it was the thought of leaving her that overcame him.

"You don't much like Fritz Steinmetz, mother, but he has promised me that he'll look a bit after things for you until I come back—please God, I do come back! I don't know."

"No, we don't know, Carl; neither you nor I. Ludwig and Christian, when they went, said 'Carl will take care of you, mother, till we come back.' But they never will come back: they have gone elsewhere."

"Yes," said Carl softly, taking his mother's hand in one of his, as he dashed away his tears with the other.

"Franz Hartmann's killed. Have you heard it?"

"Yes. And Bernhard Smidth: and—oh, ever so many more. Killed or disabled."

"It may be your fate, Carl."

"I know that."

"Ay, but do you feel it?"

"I am feeling it, mother, more than I care to show. Why—how can it be otherwise?" he added, in emotion. "We seem to go out but to die. Never was there so fatal a war as this war. If we gain victory, we purchase it dearly. My turn may come ere many days be over."

Bending his head upon his hand, Carl Werter allowed thought to take its sway. Can we picture what it was? No. For we are not brought face to face with death, as he was. He had looked out for a green old age: as all young fellows do look who are hearty and strong. The allotted years of man were three-score and ten, he had learnt; and he had seen but five-and-twenty of them! He had looked to make a home for himself some day, and to bring pretty Marie Voight into it: his mother need not have been afraid of Lisa von Steinmetz. But now, all that might never come. It was so little!—as compared with the countless ages of eternity. A poor five-and-twenty years for this world; a span; a unit, amidst the ages that had rolled on before his birth: the ages that were to come after his death! Oh, what had he done—what had the numbers of his poor companions done, now bleaching on the plains of France—that this cruel fate should be visited upon them? And he had done all kinds of wrong things!—he had tried so little in his careless life to please the good God!

"There were six of us once, mother. Three are gone, and three are here. Father, and Ludwig, and Christian; they've left us: you, and I, and Hulda stay. For how long, I wonder?"

"For all we know, Hulda may be a widow now, Carl. Why should the shots spare him any more than they have spared others? And what will she do for bread for her poor little ones? Oh Carl, my son! none of you can feel this as I am feeling it."

He pressed her hand closer, and put his cheek upon it. The tears were raining down.

"It is of you I am thinking, not of Hulda. My mother, if I go, and fall, who will win *your* bread?"

"That's nothing; it does not give me a care," she answered, her eye lightening. "Put it that I die of want, Carl—what would matter it? I should but go to my dear ones a bit the sooner."

"You'll just say that you forgive me for all the trouble I've caused you, won't you, mother?" he whispered, in a tone of anguish—and indeed the anguish that lay on both their spirits was something past telling. "Perhaps I shan't see you again after to-night."

"Not in this world—it may be. Oh, my darling! my darling boy!" she wailed. "My heart's sore within me. They are taking you out to die too."

"Yes, mother," he answered, shading his eyes, "the death-shot may find me out as it has the others. What merry children we were, playing about; us three lads, and Hulda! It seems but as last week."

"Carl, there's another side to it," she rejoined, after a pause. "There is: it is not all gloom. If I could but know that you die in the faith and love of Christ, that Ludwig and Christian died in it, I should thank God for taking you, and think it a mercy. Not long should I be left behind. At the best, with all this dreadful desolation around, there is little left in this world, for us Germans, worth living for. I want to read you a chapter, Carl. For the last time."

He set himself to listen in the reverent manner which she had taught her children. It was the second chapter of Joel. Pondering over her Bible that night, the singular application of this chapter to the present distressing time of warfare, had struck her. Solemnly she read it, giving to some of the verses an emphatic earnestness. And then she laid the book open on the table by the candle, while she spoke to him.

"It seems as if it had been written for us, Carl. A devouring fire has the great army brought with them through the land: before them had been as the garden of Eden, behind them a desolate wilderness."

"True enough," he murmured. "Spoliation has marked the army's course everywhere."

"Ay. The day of the Lord is very great and terrible, and who can abide it? But in the midst of it He tells us to turn to Him, Carl—with weeping and mourning, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Carl, do *you* turn to Him! turn to Him with your whole heart upon the battlefield, though it be but with a word. Turn to Him in dying."

Carl Werter looked up, as if scarcely understanding.

"Look to the last verse of the chapter, Carl. 'And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered.' Were these words written for nothing, think you, my son?"

Oh Carl, listen to me," she added, bending forward and clasping her hands solemnly upon his; "listen to me, for I seem to speak as if Heaven's spirit were upon mine; I believe that God means these words to be taken in their true and literal aspect, and has given them for us in our stress of extremity. Should a fatal shot strike you, Carl, do *you* call upon the Lord's name: the Redeemer's—'Lord save me.' A moment will certainly be given you for it."

Carl caught up his breath with a sob.

"He is slow to anger, and of great mercy; they are His own words, Carl. He sees the cruel and bitter fate that has fallen on our country; He sees how the young men, in the spring tide of their folly, are hurried off to the death field without time for reformation. And will He fail them who call upon Jesus at the last moment, because they have not time for a better repentance? No, no. They are his own words: 'And whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered.' Carry them with you, Carl; and do *you* so call in your last great need."

"I will try," he whispered.

Oh but it is a fearful and devastating war; this, that is raging. Carl Werter went forth at morning light, his mother's tears and prayers and blessings following him as her best legacy; and he was destined never to go back again. As his brothers' lives were lost, so was his.

He fell in November. In a skirmish between Versailles and Paris. A wounded comrade carried back the news to his doubly bereaved mother.

"Carl sent you his dear love, Madame Werter, and bade me tell you that he never forgot. I stood by him when he was shot down. The bullet struck him here"—touching his chest—"he lived but about five minutes. I heard him pray to the good God, that he might be pardoned and ransomed for the Saviour's sake. He looked quite happy."

"Yes—yes," said Charlotte Werter. "They are God's own words; given for our comfort and salvation. '*And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.*' May they be remembered by all who shall die in battle!"



THE BOY HERO.

(An Incident of the Present War.)

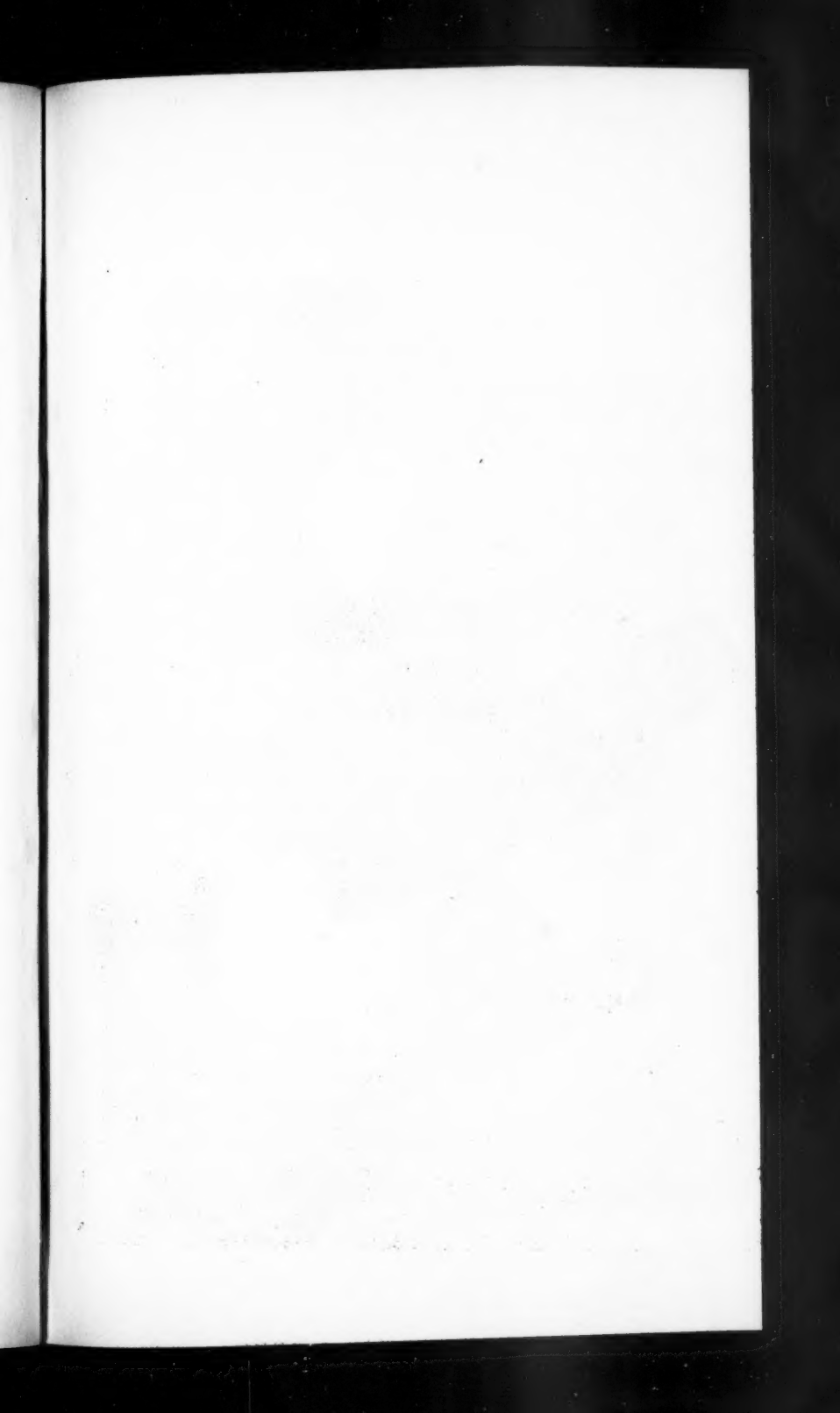
THE sun is rising ; a fair young face,
Eager, and bright, and gay,
Is pleading hard for a foremost place
In the first wild charge that day.
The prayer is granted ; a word of thanks,
And the boyish hero is in the ranks,
Wild to begin the fray.

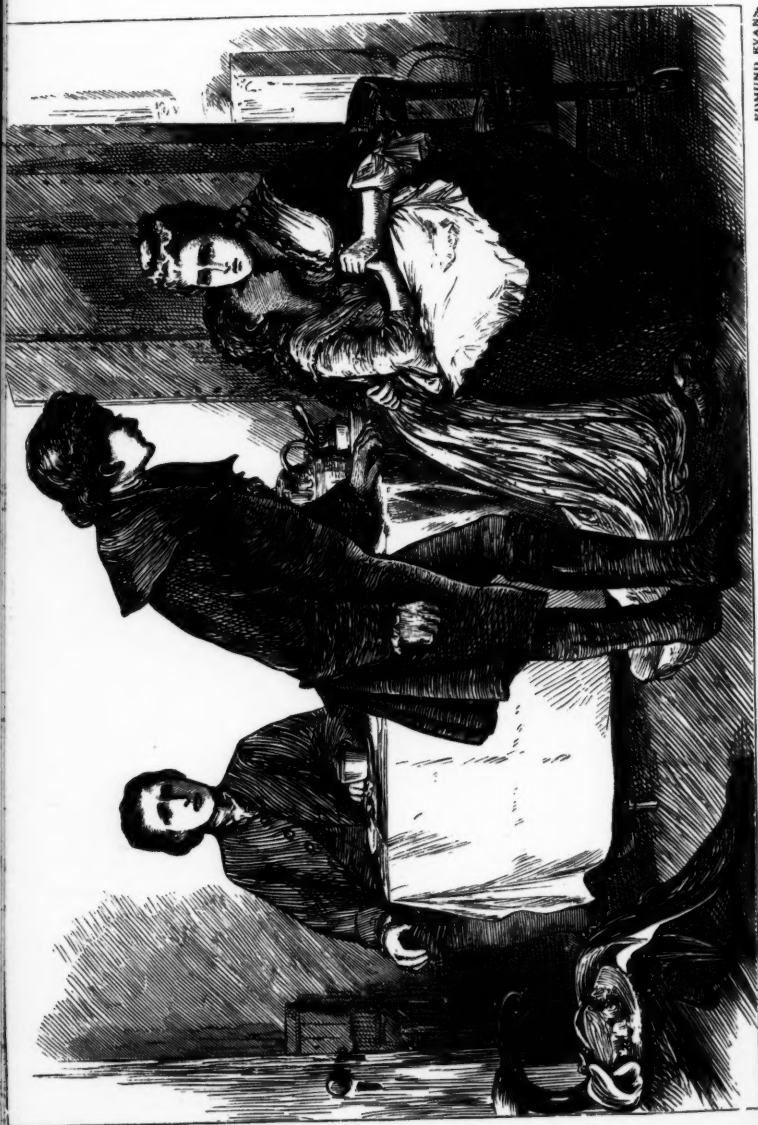
The sun is up ; o'er the scorching plain,
With the roar of the guns there come
The furious shout, the cry of pain,
And the sound of trump and drum.
Where the fight is thickest a girlish face
And a small, firm hand still keep their place,
Though growing faint and numb.

The sun goes down ; a sorrowful joy
Is resting on every brow,
And tears for the husband or only boy
Are choking the thankful vow.
The drums are hushed, and the noise is done ;
The battle is fought, the fight is won ;
But where is the young lad now ?

The pretty boy-warrior, freed from pain,
His features without a frown,
Lies close to the walls amongst the slain,
By a random shot struck down.
But his soul has gone to the angels' home,
Where sorrow and death no more can come,
There to receive his crown.

R. B. A.





EDMUND EVANS.

"Oh, Mary, forgive me!"

M. ELLEN EDWARDS.